

Committee for Public Management Research
Discussion Paper 8

The Management of Cross-Cutting Issues

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Foreword

This paper is one of a series commissioned by the Committee for Public Management Research. The Committee is developing a comprehensive programme of research designed to serve the needs of the future developments of the Irish public service. Committee members come from the Departments of Finance, Environment and Local Government, Health and Children, Taoiseach, and Public Enterprise, and also from Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and the Institute of Public Administration. The research is undertaken for the Committee by the research department at the Institute of Public Administration.

This series aims to prompt discussion and debate on topical issues of particular interest or concern. Papers may outline experience, both national and international, in dealing with a particular issue. Or they may be more conceptual in nature, prompting the development of new ideas on public management issues. The papers are not intended to set out any official position on the topic under scrutiny. Rather, the intention is to identify current thinking and best practice.

We would very much welcome comments on this paper and on public management research more generally. To ensure the discussion papers and wider research programme of the Committee for Public Management Research are relevant to managers and staff, we need to hear from you. What do you think of the issues being raised? Are there other topics you would like to see researched?

Research into the problems, solutions and successes of public management processes, and the way organisations can best adapt in a changing environment, has much to contribute to good management, and is a vital element in the public service renewal process. The Committee for Public Management Research intends to provide a service to people working in public organisations by enhancing the knowledge base on public management issues.

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General information on the activities of the Committee for Public Management Research, including this paper and others in the series, can be found on its world wide web site: www.irlgov.ie/cpmr; information on Institute of Public Administration research in progress can be found at www.ipa.ie.

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- Environment and Local Government
- Social, Community and Family Affairs
- Taoiseach
- Tourism, Sport and Recreation

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Responsibility for the content of the paper, however, rests with the author.

Richard Boyle
March 1999

Executive Summary

This paper examines recent initiatives to manage ‘cross-cutting’ issues. Issues such as drugs, homelessness and unemployment cut across government departments and levels of government. Such intractable cross-cutting issues, which are government priorities, require management actions which go beyond traditional approaches such as inter-departmental committees if they are to be tackled effectively. Joined up solutions to the problems need to be found.

In this study, the national and international literature on the management of cross-cutting issues is reviewed, in order to identify good practice examples. Also, a small number of case studies of the management of cross-cutting issues – covering drugs, poverty, civil service management change, and homelessness – are investigated. Lessons are drawn from these experiences and ways of progressing the management of cross-cutting issues identified. The paper is divided into five main parts. Following the Introduction, in Chapter 2 the international and Irish policy context is addressed. In Chapter 3, the specific role of Strategic Results Areas in developing a strategic framework for cross-cutting issues is explored. Chapter 4 investigates the main structures and processes used to facilitate the management of cross-cutting issues. In Chapter 5, the role of cross-cutting teams is examined in some detail. Finally, in Chapter 6, the lessons learned are summarised. The focus is on actions needed at both national and local levels in order to ensure co-ordinated service provision.

Frameworks and processes for managing cross-cutting issues

Chapters 2 to 4 of the paper look at frameworks and processes which have been put in place internationally and in Ireland for the management of cross-cutting issues. The emphasis is on what has been referred to as ‘joined up solutions for joined up problems.’ Developing a shared vision across participants is important. In this context, the development and tracking of Strategic Results Areas (SRAs) or their equivalent is important. Ensuring that SRAs are stepped down into actionable statements by the agencies involved is vital to their success. Encouraging political/administrative dialogue and commitment to seeing the vision through to reality is a key task – managing what New Zealand officials refer to as the ‘purple zone’ of conversation between ministers operating in the policy (blue) zone and officials operating in the administration (red) zone. A common vision must be balanced against the organisation and individual goals of participants. Recognition of self-interest is important in the process of developing common goals and trust.

Co-ordinating instruments are available to facilitate co-operation and co-ordination. In particular, regulatory instruments (facilitating entry or setting up barriers to entry), financial instruments (such as capital investments, tax reliefs) and communicative instruments (the terms used to formulate issues or problems) are available to steer initiatives. Financial incentives can be particularly influential. Pilot funding to encourage joint working can usefully generate innovative approaches. With regard to mainstream

funding, issues such as whether or not funding is once-off, what vote it is allocated through, and how it can be accessed must be clear. Joint budgets may be needed in some circumstances.

The type of co-ordinating structures needed vary depending on the complexity of the problem. At the political level, cabinet committees and/or junior ministers with particular cross-cutting responsibilities are common approaches used to drive initiatives. At the administrative level, super-ministries, inter-departmental task forces and cross-cutting teams are the main structures used nationally. At the implementation level, various models (not necessarily mutually exclusive) are available: first stop shops; co-location of services; administrative integration; and programme integration. A strong role for the centre of government is necessary in addressing particularly intractable issues of government concern. Here, the centre sets priorities, establishes the policy framework, engages in information gathering and analysis and monitors impacts.

An important catalyst for getting things done is the taking of a user perspective on issues. Where services are evaluated and audited from a user point of view, this helps to prevent organisations from being inward looking. A user perspective can help generate a culture of co-operation and co-ordination with regard to service delivery.

Using cross-cutting teams

Chapter 5 explores the role of cross-cutting teams, a new approach to the management of cross-cutting issues. They differ from traditional approaches such as inter-departmental committees or task forces. Teams are drawn, but operationally detached, from the constituent organisations. Co-ordination is provided by a minister/minister of state or cabinet committee. They are cross-functional in their approach to change, cutting across existing vertical hierarchies.

Clarifying purpose and accountabilities is an important early task for cross-cutting teams. Building trust and respect, within the team and with the implementing agencies, is important in furthering an agreed agenda for action. Time needs to be taken early on to clarify who does what and who is responsible for what. Teams need to establish effective ground rules for behaviour. They also need to set and monitor interim milestones to check progress.

Assigning the right people to teams and ensuring that they have the necessary supports (accommodation, secretarial, IT) to get on with the job is vital to their success. Human resource management policies in organisations must be adapted to encourage participation on cross-cutting teams as a developmental opportunity for staff. A blend of skills and experience is needed on teams. Where appropriate, the inclusion on the team+ of participants from key groupings, such as the community and voluntary sector, can be helpful.

Teams can only do so much themselves. Getting things done through others is crucial for implementation. Within the team, members can be assigned the task of building up

relationships with particular groups. Outside the team, the assignment by organisations of staff who can liaise with the team and promote change in their own organisations can be helpful. So too is ensuring that agreed tasks are incorporated into divisional and unit business plans.

Lessons learned

In Chapter 6 a number of detailed lessons learned from experience are summarised. In general, lack of effective co-ordination is probably one of the most commonly heard complaints about public service delivery. A number of initiatives are now underway to tackle difficult cross-cutting issues and improve co-ordination. Central to their success is a sound understanding of the incentives operating on individuals and organisations to act as they do. Awareness is needed of the opportunities that exist to promote better joint working to arrive at joint solutions to the challenges faced. Structural, process and cultural factors all need to be addressed if effective, well co-ordinated government of cross-cutting issues is to be achieved.

1

Introduction

1.1 Study background and terms of reference

Government departments and agencies, local authorities and health boards are structured so that there is a close fit between their mandate and the issues with which they are faced. However, increasingly there are policy issues which cut across departments and levels of government. These 'cross-cutting' issues, such as children's needs, crime and drugs, need to be addressed in a coherent manner. Otherwise, programmes developed may result in unco-ordinated action, or at worst, produce results that cancel one another out.

There are varying degrees of co-ordination required to manage cross-cutting issues. A Canadian government task force set up to study the management of horizontal policy issues (Canada, Report of the Deputy Ministers' Task Force on Managing Horizontal Policy Issues, 1996, pp. 7–9) identifies three levels of a continuum for the management of horizontal issues:

- Issues focused on ongoing departmental business. Here, each department is responsible for ensuring coherence within its area of responsibility by use of routine processes for consultation. The Cabinet system provides structure and processes for these issues when changes in policy are required.
- Issues necessitating integrated policies. With these issues, the mandates, resources and expertise lie in a number of departments. Here, interdependence means more than just co-ordination of activities and policies. A collaborative policy community is needed, with a degree of responsibility for both lead and partner departments.
- Issues which are key priorities. These are policy initiatives which are key to the strategic direction of the government as a whole. The level of ministerial involvement is consequently greater.

In this paper, attention is concentrated on issues towards the latter end of this continuum, where the cross-cutting issues clearly lie beyond the competence of any one department and where the government has a strategic interest. Cross-cutting issues in this situation have a number of characteristics (OECD, 1996, p.29): they are largely unprecedented; they outstrip conventional patterns of thought; they require organisational supports that

transcend institutionally defined policy fields; and they increase the need to integrate rather than merely co-ordinate.

This issue is explicitly recognised in *Delivering Better Government* (1996) (DBG): 'Increasingly ... effective action necessitates new approaches to understanding, developing and managing the linked activities and processes that result in the desired outcome, whether the provision of services to the public or sound policy advice to Ministers and the Government. These new approaches challenge traditional Departmental and functional boundaries' (p.14). The Public Service Management Act, 1997, also addresses the issue, providing for the assignment of responsibility for cross-departmental matters.

The formation of cross-cutting teams which span the issues and with the authority to address them are seen as a means of promoting progress in addressing complex cross-cutting issues. Cross-departmental teams are proposed in *Delivering Better Government* (1996, p.15) as part of the approach to the better management of cross-departmental issues. Such cross-cutting teams are a new feature on the public management landscape, and pose particular challenges. As Scott (1997) notes in the context of New Zealand:

These teams are drawn from the necessary constituent organisations, are facilitated, and lead to conclusions which are endorsed by top management and then implemented by people who were part of the team and strongly committed to its conclusions. This is a hard act to pull within any organisation and even harder across public sector institutions. It does not characterise the work of most inter-departmental committees. These are commonly driven by the individual agendas of the constituents and the compromises are not uncommonly shallow and not a call for action ... These (cross-cutting team) initiatives create complex patterns of relationships but are plainly an appropriate response to the cross-cutting issues.

Cross-cutting teams are also proposed as a new feature on the policy landscape by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF). The NESF (1997, p.55) is proposing to undertake its projects mainly through teams. These teams will be drawn from the social partner organisations on NESF, and will undertake policy design in specific policy areas. The formation and development of cross-cutting teams as a response to the needs arising from cross-cutting issues is one of a number of initiatives examined in this paper. The terms of reference for the study were to:

- a) determine what the international and national literature has to say on the management of cross-cutting issues, and mechanisms for ensuring effective action;
- b) review a small number of case studies of the management of cross-cutting issues; and
- c) outline the implications from the lessons learned from international and national experience for the best way of progressing the management of cross-cutting issues under the Strategic Management Initiative(SMI)/Delivering Better Government agenda.

The focus in this paper is on steps which can be taken to promote better management of cross-cutting issues; it is not intended to be a detailed review of theoretical considerations underlying the analysis of cross-cutting issues. For a review of the theory underlying the management of cross-cutting issues readers are referred to Benton et al (1996, Chp. 2). In terms of general background reading on the topic, readers are also referred to: Humphreys (1997) for a discussion of lessons learned from the management of the Fifth Irish Presidency of the European Union for the management of cross-departmental issues; OECD (1996) for a discussion on building policy coherence; and Murray (1998) for a discussion on key structures and processes for policy co-ordination in Ireland.

1.2 Study approach and methodology

For this study, background material was obtained from literature, from journals and from material published on government web sites. A small number of case studies of practice was investigated, through semi-structured interviews with key personnel involved in managing cross-cutting issues in each case. The cases studied are:

- The Strategic Management Initiative, where a cross-cutting team was established to support the initiative (the SMI team) based in the Department of the Taoiseach.
- The National Drugs Strategy, where a cross-cutting team was established to address the issue of drugs (the National Drugs Strategy team).
- The National Anti-Poverty Strategy where a team was established to co-ordinate the strategy (the NAPS team) based in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.
- The Homeless Initiative, a voluntary/statutory partnership established under the direction of Dublin Corporation and the Eastern Health Board.

Where appropriate, some local initiatives established to address issues raised in the cases studied were also examined, to provide information on the management of cross-cutting issues at the local level.

1.3 Structure for the paper

The paper is divided into five parts. In Chapter 2, the international and Irish policy context is addressed. In Chapter 3, the specific role of Strategic Results Areas in developing a strategic framework for cross-cutting issues is explored. Chapter 4 investigates the main structures and processes used to facilitate the management of cross-cutting issues. In Chapter 5, the role of cross cutting teams is examined in some detail covering: purpose and accountabilities; the determination and allocation of tasks; and the creation of a supportive culture. Finally, in Chapter 6, the lessons learned are summarised.

2

The International and Irish Policy Contexts for the Management of Cross-Cutting Issues

2.1 The international policy context

The Nordic countries and the Netherlands have, over recent years, emphasised the complexities involved in the government of policy networks based around cross-cutting issues. These developments are summarised in the recent Dutch literature on governance and networks (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (eds), 1997; Kickert, 1997). Essentially, a critique is made of the assumption that governments somehow stand apart from ‘society’ and are responsible for solving problems and steering change in the desired direction. As Kickert (1997, p. 736) notes:

This critique of an omnipotent government stimulated a positive shift in Dutch administrative sciences in the second half of the 1980s. Research became more and more directed towards exploring the possibilities of government steering under conditions of complexity. The complex public policy networks of social actors were no longer considered the image of an incompetent government. Knowledge and insight in complex and dynamic public policy networks were seen as a way to improve government steering.

This network perspective has led to a shift in the view of how management should respond to issues such as cross-cutting issues generated by complex policy networks. Management needs to focus less on planning and leading and more on guiding, mediating and influencing (see Table 1). In order to do this, a variety of instruments are available for use in network management:

	'Classical' perspective	Network perspective
Dimensions:		
Organisational setting	Single authority structure	Divided authority structure
Goal structure	Activities are guided by clear goals and well-defined problems	Various and changing definitions of problems and goals Mediator, process manager, network builder
Role of manager	System controller	Guiding interactions and providing opportunities
Management tasks	Planning and guiding organisational processes	Selecting actors and resources, influencing network conditions, and handling strategic complexity
Management activities	Planning, design and leading	

- *Regulatory instruments.* Some of these may influence the number of actors in a network and the power they wield. The task of such instruments, be they laws, regulations etc, is to set up barriers to entry or facilitate entry. Other regulatory instruments govern the relationships that exist between the various policy actors, including rights of consultation and the power of veto.
- *Financial instruments.* For example, if a public body invests venture capital in the work of a policy actor, a certain amount of authority is given in exchange for this investment. Tax reliefs, on the other hand, may strengthen the autonomy of actors in the policy arena. Financial instruments can also help induce actors who have hitherto functioned independently to co-operate.
- *Communicative instruments.* Communicative instruments such as policy briefings or green papers aim to bring about a change in the perception of problems, and in people's

values and norms. Influencing the terms which actors use to formulate problems – the management of meaning – is important here.

This approach to governance puts significant emphasis on the concept of steering: how one actor can influence the behaviour of other actors in a network context. The network manager, in this case the government, plays the role of conductor rather than controller.

Stepping down from the broad policy arena, within government there is a need to determine the respective roles of politicians and public servants in addressing cross-cutting issues. New Zealand has given some attention to this issue, in the context of their development of Strategic Result Areas (SRAs) and Key Result Areas (KRAs) for the management of cross-portfolio policy objectives (see Chapter 3 for more details). The phrase ‘purple zone’ has been coined to describe the approach they have taken to creating a common space between politicians and administrators:

Essentially, the purple zone is the arena of conversation between ministers and their senior officials which ensures that appropriate attention is being paid to the Government’s priorities and that the consequent interdependencies, risks and departmental initiatives are being managed in a way that serves the interests of government as a whole. Its tangible products are the SRAs and the KRAs around which the public service builds its purchase and performance agreements. The conversation also strengthens the informal, cultural components of strategy notably the sense of shared purpose and collegiality among the key players. The red (administration) and blue (policy) zones, and the purple zone in which they blend, encapsulate the total performance management system. The trick from an overall system perspective is to maintain an optimal balance between direction, control and the autonomous energy of individual managers (Matheson, Scanlan and Tanner, 1997, p. 85).

The aim here is to ensure that major cross-cutting issues receive regular and well-informed attention as part of the common agenda of ministers, chief executives and central agencies. The emergence of sectoral strategies is one development from this process. For example, environmental agencies have developed a ‘green package’ of priorities and advocated an ‘environmental envelope’ of new spending to achieve them; in the area of border control

and biosecurity, sectoral policy principles have been developed which can be consistently applied through the key result areas for individual departments. As Matheson et.al (1997, p. 88) note:

The development of sectoral strategy has already led to improved information flows, more substantial consultation with commercial interests and non-profit organisations, greater clarity about the Government's vision and priorities and a surprisingly powerful synergy among agencies with a history of sometimes fractious relationships.

Canada too has recently focused attention on the management of cross-cutting issues, or that there is termed horizontal policy issues. A Deputy Ministers'¹ Task Force was set up in 1995 to examine the management of cross-cutting issues and make recommendations to improve coherence and collaboration. A report produced in 1996 deals with three dimensions of horizontal issues management: process; systems; and culture (Canada, Report of the Deputy Ministers' Task Force on *Managing Horizontal Policy Issues*, 1996). The main conclusions from the report can be summarised as follows:

1. Process – getting the fundamentals right:

- Take time up front to define the issue and the expected outcomes.
- Establish clear accountability of both lead and partner departments, through the use of a mandate letter agreed between the lead and partner departments.
- Develop partnerships with the broader community.
- Establish realistic and clear timeliness.
- Invest the necessary resources in co-ordination, and establish resourcing rules for implementation.
- Conduct a post-mortem of the process upon completion.

2. Systems – strengthening the inter-departmental policy-making system:

- Improve cabinet committee support, bringing assistant deputy ministers together for local policy discussions, linked to cabinet committee planning sessions.
- Streamline decision making at cabinet of routine items, freeing ministerial and departmental time for longer-term policy issues.

- Establish committees of senior officials in areas of social and economic policy, with interdepartmental groups to support each committee.
- Use temporary interdepartmental task forces more frequently on selected horizontal and strategic policy issues.
- Establish a standing committee for long-term policy planning, with membership drawn from both deputy minister and assistant deputy minister ranks.
- Invest in policy research, development and analysis, to build the intellectual capital for dealing with policy issues of the future.

3. *Culture – working together towards common objectives:*

- Consistently make interdepartmental collaboration and teamwork part of the communications of senior management and central agencies.
- Develop informal and formal rewards for teams and team leaders.
- Include a section on teamwork and promotion of team-based approaches in performance contracts and appraisals.
- Formally recognise an aptitude for, and experience in, collaborative policy development as an important criterion for promotion and recruitment, particularly at senior levels.
- Give priority to training and development initiatives for improved horizontal policy development.
- Identify a handful of pilot projects to test and refine new collaborative approaches. Evaluate the benefits.
- Make a progress report on horizontal issues management within two years of completion of the Task Force report.

Most recently, the UK government announced its intention in July 1998 to reform the Cabinet Office, in large part to improve the handling of cross-departmental issues of policy and service delivery. This reform of the Cabinet Office complements the recent creation of the Social Exclusion Unit within the Cabinet Office as a new way of handling cross-departmental issues in this particular area (see Box 1).

Box 1: The social Exclusion Unit in the UK Cabinet Office

The purpose of the social exclusion unit is to help break the vicious circle of unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing etc., and co-ordinate and improve government action to reduce social exclusion. Three priority tasks have been identified for its first actions: truancy and school exclusions; street living; and worst estates. In addition, the unit is to focus on improving mechanisms for integrating the work of departments, local authorities and other agencies at national level and on the ground.

The unit reports to the prime minister, and is staffed by civil servants from across Whitehall departments and inward secondees from local authorities, voluntary bodies and other key agencies. It has been set up for an initial two-year period, after which its future will be reviewed. The prime minister steers the work of the unit and chairs regular meetings with relevant ministers to review the initiative. Policy decisions are cleared through the appropriate cabinet committee.

To build on the unit's cross-departmental focus, the prime minister has nominated a network of ministers in the departments most affected, to draw together exclusion issues in their own departments, and help guide the unit's work. The unit also aims to draw on outside expertise and research, and link into external networks to hear the view of local authorities, business, voluntary organisations and others dealing with exclusions.

Source: Social Exclusion Unit home page on the world wide web: <http://www.open.gov.uk/co/seu>

Reform of the Cabinet Office follows criticism of the perceived failure to co-ordinate the activities of government departments, and an absence of strong central machinery to do the work of co-ordination (Walker, 1997, p. 14). Four main reforms of the Cabinet Office are proposed (Written Statement on the Cabinet Office review, 1998):

1. The merger of the Office of Public Service (OPS) with the rest of Cabinet Office. Cabinet Office is primarily concerned with policy formulation, the OPS with implementation. The intention is that a unified organisation will better link the two.

2. The creation of a new Performance Innovation Unit in the Cabinet Office. This will complement the Treasury's role in monitoring departmental programmes. It will focus on selected issues that cross departmental boundaries, with an emphasis on the better co-ordination and delivery of policy and services which involve more than one public sector body. The unit will assemble teams from inside and outside the civil service to carry out studies of areas where cross- departmental working needs to be improved.
3. The establishment of a new Centre for Management and Policy Studies in the Cabinet Office, incorporating a reshaped Civil Service College. The centre will commission research into innovation in strategy and delivery, and will act as a repository of best practice.
4. More emphasis to be given to the corporate management of the civil service as a whole. The Cabinet Office is to have a new focus as the corporate headquarters of the civil service. Two particular issues to be addressed are ensuring a coherent information technology strategy and that personnel systems deliver the skills needed for modern government.

Politically, the Cabinet Office will continue to report to the Prime Minister. However, the Minister for the Cabinet Office will report to parliament on the management of the civil service and, in particular, will oversee the programme of reform as outlined above. The Minister for the Cabinet Office will have responsibility for driving the co-ordination agenda and co-ordinating strategy and policy across departments.

2.2 The management of cross-cutting issues in Ireland

Current thinking on the management of cross-cutting issues is particularly influenced by four recent developments: the production of *Delivering Better Government* (1996); the passing of the Public Service Management Act, 1997; the production of departmental strategy statements in 1998; and developments at the local level.

Delivering Better Government

In their second report to government, *Delivering Better Government* (1996), the Co-ordinating Group of Secretaries highlight the importance of cross-cutting issues. They indicate that the existing civil service structure is not well-g geared to tackling such issues. Limited arrangements for consultation, co-ordination and co-operation are identified as a

problem, as is a tendency towards 'territorial protection' rather than co-operation for results.

In order to help their thinking on approaches to the management of cross-cutting issues, the Co-ordinating Group established three working groups at assistant secretary level to consider more appropriate mechanisms for cross-departmental actions in the areas of child care, competitiveness and environmental issues. As *Delivering Better Government* (1996, p. 15) notes:

The working group reports made clear that innovative approaches are required which clearly articulate the strategic policy objectives in the different areas, which develop new approaches and mechanisms to implement policy and, critically, to monitor and assess progress.

Drawing from the working group reports and current thinking, the group identify a number of proposals to strengthen the approach to the management of cross-cutting issues:

- The development of Strategic Result Areas, to identify the key issues where cross-departmental actions are needed. Examples of such areas are given: drugs; employment; competitiveness; poverty and unemployment; and economic and social development at the local level. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy is also cited as an example where the objectives from this initiative should be integrated into the objectives of all relevant departments and agencies.
- The establishment of cabinet sub-committees for key areas of government policy. There has been a growing tendency recently to use ad hoc cabinet sub-committees as a forum to address key strategic concerns of a limited number of departments e.g. in relation to Northern Ireland, drugs, and devolution and local government (Murray, 1998, p.42).
- The allocation of specific co-ordinating roles to ministers and ministers of state. Ministers of state are assigned specific portfolios which can, at times, span the work of several departments.
- Cross-departmental teams are recommended, with co-ordination provided by a minister/minister of state and with a specific lead department. Issues which could be

addressed by such teams are identified: child care; drugs; employment; competitiveness; unemployment and social exclusion; financial services; local development. The aim of the teams is to ensure that action is taken and the required outcomes achieved.

Public Service Management Act, 1997

Building on the recommendations outlined in *Delivering Better Government* (1996), the Public Service Management Act, 1997 addresses the issue of responsibility for cross-departmental matters. Section 12 of the Act deals with the assignment of responsibility, and is explained in outline by Tutty (1998, pp.97-98):

The Public Service Management Act empowers ministers of state, jointly with their counterparts in one or more other departments, to assign responsibility to civil servants for the performance of functions relating to both or all of the departments concerned. The ministers continue to have the right to perform the functions concurrently. A specific provision is made in the Act for consultation with the secretaries general of the departments involved.

With regard to the issue of accountability, subsection 12 (4) of the Act provides that orders assigning responsibilities to civil servants will specify to whom they shall be accountable. The Minister for Finance will specify the manner of accountability for responsibilities involving the use of financial resources. Thus, the specific nature of accountability will be determined by the nature and remit of each cross-departmental group.

Departmental strategy statements

The implementation group of nine secretaries general and heads of office is mandated to drive the public service modernisation agenda. Early in 1998, the implementation group issued guidelines to departments and offices on the preparation of strategy statements, under the Public Service Management Act, 1997. As part of this guidance, they note that each department's strategy statement should identify and address relevant cross-departmental issues, and the steps to be taken to consult with other relevant departments and agencies. Arising from this process, a number of means of promoting cross-departmental co-operation are highlighted by departments in their strategy statements:

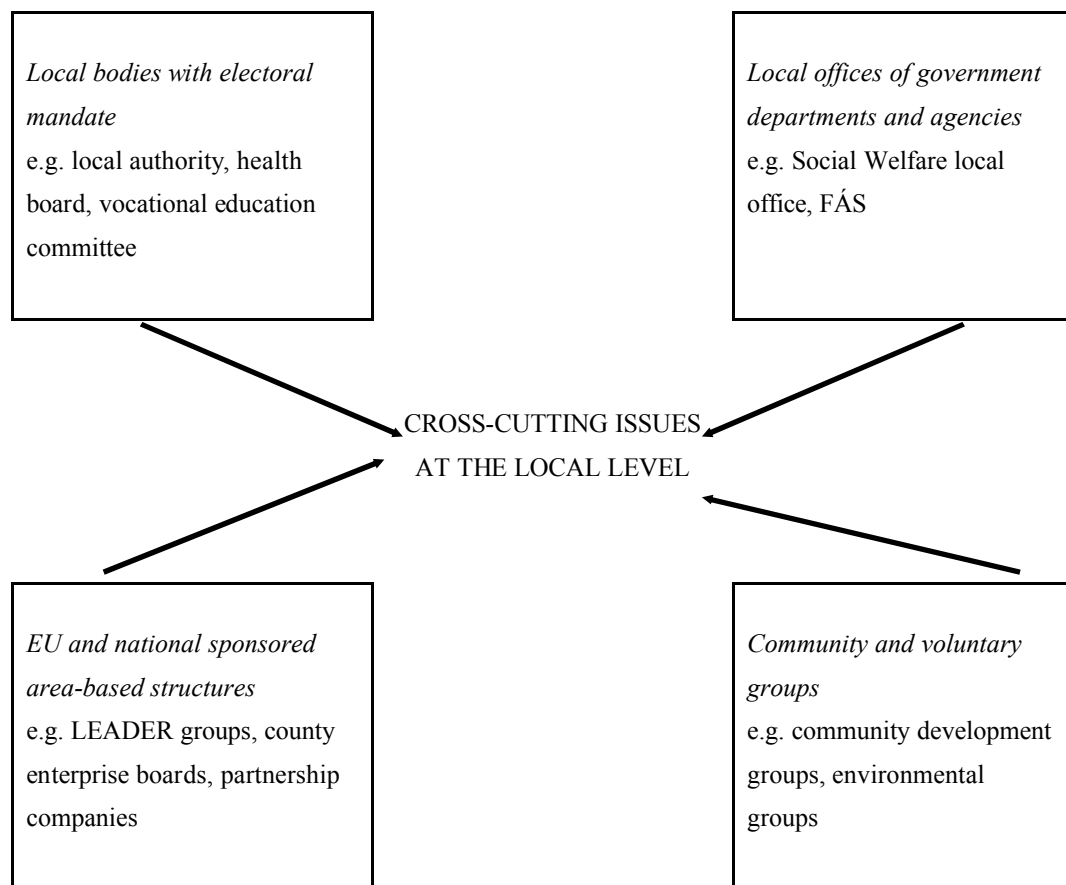
- Through cabinet sub-committees. For example, the Department of Education and Science note their minister's membership of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Local Development and Drug Misuse Prevention.
- Through a minister of state with cross-departmental responsibilities. For example, the Department of Health and Children note that in February 1998, the government delegated to the minister of state with responsibility for the Child Care Act and the Adoption Acts additional responsibilities concerning vulnerable children within the remit of the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Education and Science. Also, in the Department of Education and Science, a new Minister of State for Science and Technology has been appointed with complementary responsibilities at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.
- Through particular teams or committees established to address specific issues. Examples here include:
 - cross-departmental teams, such as the National Drugs Strategy team. The Department of Health and Children note that to support the minister of state with responsibility for vulnerable children, a cross-departmental team will be put in place, with the Department of Health and Children taking the lead role in co-ordinating it.
 - inter-departmental committees. Examples here include an inter-departmental committee set up by the Department of Agriculture and Food to address rural development issues; and the high level tax strategy group led by the Department of Finance.
 - ad hoc, once off events aimed at promoting better co-ordination. An example here is the National Forum for Early Childhood Education hosted by the Department of Education and Science in 1998. This forum was representative of groups involved in providing early childhood education services throughout the country and brought together service providers and experts in the field to advise on a strategy for the future development of early childhood education.

Managing cross-cutting issues at the local level

It is at the local level that cross-cutting issues, and how they are managed, most directly impact on service users. It is here at the local level that a wide variety of government bodies and agencies interact to provide services to address issues such as drugs, social exclusion and economic development. Local authorities, health boards, local development agencies such as ADM partnerships and Leader groups sponsored by government

departments, community and voluntary groups – all interact in the provision of services. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the range of bodies that can be involved in cross-cutting issues at the local level. Particularly notable in recent times has been the establishment of area-based structures in response to EU and national initiatives. These initiatives have resulted in significant innovations, but one danger with them is that a plethora of initiatives can arise, each generating its own separate, independent structures at local and national level. At times, the range of groupings involved in issues can be unco-ordinated and confusing for the user.

Figure 1: The range of bodies involved in cross-cutting issues at the local level



Better Local Government (1996) and the first interim report of the Devolution Commission (1996) both indicate that to improve the management of cross-cutting issues at the local level, the existing local authority and local development systems should be

brought together and simplified. They also indicate that there should be improved co-operation generally between public service organisations operating at the local level.

If local government is to fill this role, effective area-based strategies are required. The *Report of the Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems* (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998) notes that the city and county are the best established areas in the public mind and recommends that an integrated framework at local level will need to be based on these. At sub-county level, the report recommends the use of area committees, based on local electoral areas or a combination of these.

2.3 Summary

It can be seen that the management of cross-cutting issues is exercising the minds of many governments today. It is one of the main challenges for governments operating in an increasingly complex policy environment. Internationally, a variety of approaches is being developed to manage cross-cutting issues, ranging from a focus on the management of policy networks to the strengthening of the policy co-ordination role of the centre of government. The emphasis is on what has been referred to as 'joined up solutions for joined up problems'.

In Ireland, SMI/DBG is driving a shift towards more co-ordinated approaches to the management of cross-cutting issues. This involves action at the political and administrative levels, and at the interface between them; what is termed the purple zone in New Zealand. This shift in focus requires action at the strategic and the operational level, and at central and local government levels.

Developing a Strategic Framework for Cross-Cutting Issues

- The Role of Strategic Results Areas

3.1 Introduction

In promoting collaboration in the management of cross-cutting issues, it is useful to develop the notion of what Huxham and Macdonald (1992, p.53) refer to as shared meta-strategy. They differentiate between strategy for the organisation, and meta-strategy, which is a statement of strategy for the collaboration. In the context of managing cross-cutting issues, the meta-strategy outlines the reasons why the collaboration exists and what it intends to do. It goes beyond the strategic objectives of the individual organisations, providing a context and framework within which particular cross-cutting issues are addressed.

In *Delivering Better Government* (1996, p.10), the Co-ordinating Group of Secretaries recommend that Strategic Result Areas (SRAs) be developed for the Irish civil service. These SRAs are to set out the key priority areas of government activity and the means of implementing them. One of the key roles identified for SRAs is to provide the meta-strategy for cross-cutting issues: 'One of the major benefits of the SRA approach will be to focus the attention of departments on their individual and joint contributions to achieving ... government objectives. A shared agenda will thus be developed for departments and offices'. The guidelines issued by the SMI Implementation Group in 1998 regarding the preparation of strategy statements note that the implementation group will be pursuing the development of SRAs to provide a greater focus on key issues of national importance and how best to address them in an integrated way.

The emphasis on SRAs derives from the New Zealand government's experience with the development of SRAs and Key Result Areas (KRAs). New Zealand is the only administration which has explicitly developed SRAs to date. Hence in this section the New Zealand experience with SRAs is briefly reviewed, so as to indicate the steps needed to be taken if SRAs are to provide an effective framework for the management of cross-cutting issues in Ireland².

3.2 Description of Strategic Result Areas

The SRA approach was developed in New Zealand during 1993/94. This followed criticism that whilst the public management reform agenda in New Zealand had facilitated stronger departmental and 'hierarchical' management, it had by contrast failed to address issues of collective interest, focus on the outcomes of government activity, and was weak regarding 'horizontal' management issues in general (Schick, 1996, p.54). SRAs are intended to address these concerns. Under the approach developed, the government specifies a limited number of major desired results for the public service over a three-year period (SRAs). These SRAs inform the specification of annually determined Key Result Areas (KRAs) for chief executives of government departments. Indeed, the SRAs are integrated into the performance management and remuneration regime for chief executives. Thus the government aims to link the strategic management system with the annual budgetary process and the annual chief executives' performance management system. Milestones are set to assess progress with regard to the implementation of KRAs. Boston and Pallot (1997) describe the process used to establish the initial set of SRAs in 1994:

Under the direction of the DPMC (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) each departmental chief executive was asked what they thought their minister(s) most wanted to achieve in their portfolio area, what were the two or three things that their department needed to do if the goals set out in *Path to 2010* were to be realised, and whether the items they had identified corresponded to the known priorities of their respective minister(s). Chief Executives were also asked to identify what would cause the most serious risk to the government's collective interests and key policy goals if their department failed to undertake its tasks properly. Senior DPMC officials then met with individual ministers to check whether they concurred with the key issues and potential risks identified. The process resulted in a paper which set out a new strategic management process and identified specific SRAs. The Prime Minister took this paper to the Cabinet in May 1994 and, having been referred to the Cabinet Strategy Committee for consideration, it was eventually endorsed with only minor changes (p.389).

The first set of SRAs, for 1994 to 1997, covered nine broad policy areas: maintaining and accelerating economic growth; enterprise and innovation; external linkages; education and training; community security; social assistance; health and disability services; treaty claims

settlement; and protecting and enhancing the environment. Nine policy areas are also highlighted in the SRAs for 1997 to 2000, being substantially the same as the first set, with an SRA for economic and social participation rather than social assistance being the main change (DPMC, 1997). For each SRA, there is a description of the policy area and what is to be achieved, largely in terms of outcomes. This is followed by the identification of matters of particular interest, where specific emphasis will be placed over the three-year period. An example, using the SRA for economic and social participation, is set out in Box 2.

3.3 The benefits of Strategic Result Areas

Both Schick (1996, p.54) and Boston and Pallot (1997) identify benefits which have arisen from the use of SRAs. Among the key points they make are that the process facilitates more focused discussions between ministers and officials on government priority issues; chief executives welcome the involvement in discussing medium-term policy issues; both ministers and chief executives have a clearer notion of what is expected by way of performance; and the budget is now set within a more clearly defined and articulated set of priorities. Most particularly from the point of view of this study,

Boston and Pallot (1997, p.395) note that the new framework is considered to have improved co-ordination within government: 'The SRAs have helped to identify cross-sectoral issues more clearly (e.g. truancy, preventing crime) thereby enhancing cross-portfolio integration amongst ministers and assisting departments to recognise areas of common interest. The process has also required, and therefore encouraged, co-operation between the central agencies.'

Schick (1996, p.56) notes how the stepping down of SRAs to departmental chief executive KRAs has also facilitated a better understanding of collective interest issues: 'With so many departments contributing to the same SRA, the process (of setting KRAs and milestones) gives the government a much clearer picture than before of how the various activities relate to one another. The process may also become a tool for examining duplication or inconsistencies in public policy.' When central agencies review SRAs and KRAs, they pay particular attention, inter alia, to coherence and the collective interests of the government.

Box 2: Strategic Result Areas for the Public Sector 1997-2000

Economic and Social Participation

Enhancing the ability of individuals, families and communities to actively participate in New Zealand's economic, social and cultural development through co-ordinated policies and delivery approaches that:

- *address causes of poor outcomes for individuals and families;*
- *foster community participation;*
- *are based on principles of respect, compassion and responsibility.*

Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- I. moving people from being financially dependent on welfare benefits or ACC towards self-reliance and employment wherever possible, by developing and implementing policies and service delivery approaches that:
 - are based on reciprocal obligations;
 - involve local communities;
 - will reduce the duration of unemployment;
 - promote participation in community work and training while unemployed;
- II. reducing the number of families at risk of poor outcomes for their members and improving the capacity of parents to meet their care, control and support responsibilities, through well co-ordinated social services and policy design that strengthens and supports family cohesion;
- III. broadening the options available to low income New Zealanders to meet their accommodation needs;
- IV. developing integrated long-term strategies to address the challenges of an ageing population: to enable older people to maintain their independence and participate in their communities;
- V. developing policy frameworks and effective programmes which stimulate and affirm New Zealand's evolving identity and cultural heritage, contribute to building strong, self-reliant communities and encourage civic participation by all New Zealanders.

Source: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 1997

3.4 Issues arising from the development of Strategic Result Areas

Despite their widely perceived benefits, there are a number of issues associated with the development of SRAs which have caused some discussion and debate. Boston and Pallot (1997, pp. 395–398) note several issues requiring further attention:

- The appropriate level of specificity and detail. SRAs have been criticised in some quarters for being too vague. In general, detailed and specific goals and objectives are encouraged for organisations. However, at the meta-strategy level, specific goals can

discourage consideration of alternatives, promote rigidity and fail to unite disparate interests. Broad goals ‘...on the other hand, can promote cohesion by ignoring detailed differences and emphasising widely held common values’ (Boston and Pallot, p.396).

The above points tie in with Huxham and Macdonald’s (1992, p.54) discussion on meta-strategy, where they point out the tensions between making aims explicit as against making differences explicit. They come down in favour of keeping collaborative strategic statements quite general in nature, providing enough cohesion to ensure a shared vision of progress.

- The frequency with which SRAs should be altered. In most cases, the descriptions are general enough not to require frequent change. However, some activities are specified in more detail or are more time-bound than others. The DPMC view is that a stocktake in the middle of the three-year period is useful, to remove those SRA activities where implementation has been completed or which are no longer deemed government priorities.
- The comprehensiveness of SRAs. Here the debate is whether SRAs should attempt to cover all departmental activities or focus on a few which are of strategic significance. Some ministers and departments may feel excluded if their departments do not directly contribute to SRAs. But at any one time only a few specific goals can be given detailed attention and focus. As Boston and Pallot (1997, p.397) note: ‘Unfortunately, if strategic is confused with important, all departments will strain to be seen as strategic with a resultant loss of clarity and thrust in the overall framework ... If SRAs are more focused, there needs to be sensitivity toward departments on the fringes of SRAs who might suffer a loss of morale if an ‘A’ team versus ‘B’ team mentality were to develop’.
- The support structure for SRAs. At present, the oversight of the system is characterised as remarkably lean. DPMC is a small department, and supporting SRAs stretches already tight resources. There is also the issue of the appropriate level of central oversight. Schick (1996, p.56) notes that some chief executives complain that the central agencies intervene too much, but indicates that he feels the present system works well overall, with central agencies intervening on an exceptions basis. He sees a useful role for central agencies in terms of quality control: ‘... the central agencies have developed a rating system for assessing the quality of the KRAs, as well as a matrix for linking the KRAs to the SRAs. For example, they identified at least forty-five KRAs that contribute to the Enterprise and Innovation strategic result area and comment on the quality and suitability of the KRAs.’

The State Services Commission (1998) have also reviewed experience with SRAs. They highlight a number of weaknesses with the strategic management system, which complement and take further the issues raised by Boston and Pallot above. The State Services Commission found that SRAs are not always clearly specified, and that rather than being a selective set of priorities, in practice they cover most areas of the government's work. They also highlight as a key weakness that no one has the responsibility for championing SRAs: 'Cross-government goals are seen as everyone's responsibility; yet no one is responsible for them.' In this context, the incentives on ministers to address departmental portfolio issues are in practice much stronger than the incentives for them to operate collectively. Also, there is little outcome-based evaluation to assess the effectiveness of SRAs, and weak alignment between budget decision-making and SRAs.

In order to overcome and address these weaknesses, the State Services Commission report proposes the creation of SRA networks to better focus on outcomes. The report proposes that each SRA be championed by a senior minister, known as the SRA minister, who is responsible to cabinet for the achievement of the SRA. He or she would chair an SRA committee, consisting of ministers (known as network ministers) likely to be substantially involved in the delivery of the SRA. It is envisaged that the SRA minister would have a ministerial support team of officials, providing advisory and administrative support. The proposal is that this support team be located within the network lead agency. Improved evaluation procedures would feed into the SRA network activities.

In response to these proposals, in December 1998 the New Zealand government announced a new set of Strategic Priorities for 1999-2000 (Shipley, 1998). These Strategic Priorities replace the 1997-2000 SRAs. The prime minister has established ministerial teams with lead agencies to develop outcome indicators for each Strategic Priority, against which achievements can be monitored.

3.5 Lessons for the application of Strategic Result Areas in the Irish public service

From this brief review of the New Zealand experience with SRAs, a number of lessons can be drawn for application in Ireland. Particular attention is paid to those issues important from the point of view of promoting better management of cross-cutting issues. However, an important contextual point to bear in mind regarding the use of SRAs in the Irish context is that they will be developed in a framework which includes national partnership

agreements negotiated between the government and the social partners. The current agreement, *Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness* (1996) establishes parameters and highlights issues of relevance to SRA formation.

First, there is no doubt that SRAs are viewed as a positive development in New Zealand. Whilst exhibiting some weaknesses and not being the most crucial element of the New Zealand public management reform programme, SRAs are widely seen as beneficial. In particular, they are seen to enhance the co-ordination of government activities and highlight priority strategic issues³. The production of SRAs or their equivalent would therefore seem to be a worthwhile project.

Second, it would seem that with regard to the production of SRAs, 'general rather than too specific' and 'few rather than many' would appear to be useful guidelines. General outcome-oriented statements would seem to be necessary, to give a broad indication of desired directions of progress, but at the same time enable broad coalitions of support to be developed and maintained across departments and agencies. However, at the same time SRAs should be specific enough that they are assessable and controllable. A focus on a few, key strategic issues would seem to be needed to engage and focus attention. Too many SRAs run the risk of dissipating their impact. The major cross-cutting themes of government priorities should be the focus for SRA development. In guiding this process, the programme for government will highlight political priorities. SRAs clearly need to link to government programmes and sector/area-based strategies.

Third, SRAs need to be part of a systematic approach to the establishment of a common agenda between ministers and public servants. If this is to happen, systems, procedures and a culture that facilitates such an approach to policy formulation and implementation need to be developed. Ministerial responsibility for and commitment to SRAs is central to their success, as illustrated by the New Zealand State Services Commission proposal for SRA ministers to champion and monitor SRA actions, and the subsequent establishment of ministerial teams to oversee the new Strategic Priorities. SRAs also need to be clearly linked to departmental and team-based activities if they are to have an impact. In New Zealand, KRAs play the role of stepping down the SRAs into actionable statements by departments. KRAs are linked to the annual budgetary process and the annual chief executive performance management system. Some equivalent system will be needed in Ireland. The performance management process framework developed for the Irish civil

service by Hay Management Consultants could play a key role here. In particular, from a cross-cutting issues perspective, the business plan and team objectives to be set could, where appropriate, link to SRAs and act as the equivalent of KRAs for team members. This issue is addressed further below, in section 5.3.1.

Fourth, a central overview of SRAs and departmental responses will be needed to ensure consistency and quality of response. The Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance will need to establish procedures for review. The approach used in New Zealand offers a model which attempts reasonably well to balance a central perspective with departmental autonomy.

4

Developing Appropriate Structures and Processes for the Management of Cross-Cutting Issues

4.1 Introduction

Most of the work of government is implemented through well-established vertical hierarchies. Ministers are in charge of government departments, each headed by a secretary general, with staff reporting up the line to him or her. Agencies responsible for implementation report in to departments, and exist alongside local government. If horizontal management practices are to co-exist with such well-established structures, considerable effort will be required for success. In the previous chapters, some of the attempts at promoting horizontal management have been outlined. From this review a number of important points emerge. These are summarised below, drawing also from work by Hambleton, Hoggett and Burns (1994, p.6) on integrated management at local government level. The issues outlined here – shared vision; co-ordinating instruments; co-ordinating structures; supportive policy and user community; role of the centre; and cultural change – are important process and structural elements in the management of cross-cutting issues.

4.2 The role of a shared vision

The discussion on Strategic Results Areas (SRAs) in Chapter 3 highlights the need for a commonly agreed template which transcends and informs the strategies and plans of individual organisations. In order to translate these commonly held goals into a shared vision, at both national and local levels, research by Wilson and Charlton (1997) indicates that thought needs to be given to where the cross-cutting issue concerned lies in respect to what they term the '3 Ps of partnership': provenance, purpose and participation.

When considering *provenance*, the focus is on how and why the structures were set up to tackle the cross-cutting issues. In particular, the degree of co-operation, and the time taken to develop ways of joint working, is influenced differently depending on whether organisations come together naturally or are brought together through some externally imposed mechanism. For example, some of the voluntary organisations involved in the Homeless Initiative (Boyle and Worth-Butler, 1999) felt that they have been 'involved' in the partnership initiative by Dublin Corporation and the Eastern Health Board, but were not sure themselves what this involvement meant in practice in terms of sharing access to power and influence. It has taken a good deal of time for this issue to be explored in any detail, and has influenced the capacity of the Homeless Initiative to develop a shared vision.

The question of *purpose* is central to the development of a shared vision. As mentioned above, most organisations will have their own strategies and plans to address a particular issue. What is important in managing cross-cutting issues is providing an overview purpose and vision within which individual strategies and plans can be co-ordinated, and future iterations produced. Whilst SRAs are intended to play this role at one level, other actions are also likely to be needed, particularly at the local level.

This point is stressed in the *Report of the Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems* (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998), where it is proposed that a comprehensive social and economic strategy for each county/city be produced:

In essence the requirement would be for local government, other organisational players in the public sector, the social partners and the community to come together to establish a vision for the future of their city/county over a 10 year

period (with hard targets for 3-5 years), to be clear how this will be achieved through the activities and programmes of the various partners and to encourage and monitor the delivery of the Strategy.

This over-arching purpose, or meta-goals (goals for the collaboration) as referred to by Huxham (1996, p.242), has to be balanced against the organisation and individual specific goals of participating agencies and participants. These latter goals often reflect the self-interest reasons for particular organisations being involved in a collaboration, and may or may not be explicitly stated. Getting this balance correct between meta goals and organisational goals, can be a particular challenge. The experience of the Southside Partnership, one of the partnership companies set up to prepare and implement local development plans to counter disadvantage in their areas, is that in order to develop a sense of common purpose, it is necessary to:

- clarify the self-interest of participating organisations and individuals
- establish priorities and expectations of each other
- gain the trust of others involved in the process
- identify the benefits of partnership and areas of potential conflict.

Thus, developing a shared vision entails not only developing a common purpose, but also recognising the individual organisational purposes which influence the collaboration. Such a recognition can help begin the process of developing mutual respect, understanding and trust needed in the management of cross-cutting issues.

A further key aspect of developing a shared vision is that this must be done through a process of *participation* if it is to become a commonly-owned vision. Being involved from the beginning of the process facilitates the potential of organisations involved to influence the pace and direction of action, and increases their commitment to joint working. Thus for example, in the case of each Local Drugs Task Force, membership was deliberately drawn widely to include representatives from the relevant health board, local authority, the Garda Síochána, the Probation and Welfare Service, the Education/Youth Service, FÁS, six community representatives nominated by the local partnership company, and a chairperson. Voluntary agencies delivering a drugs service in the area were also invited to participate. The task forces themselves engaged in a wide consultative process, often involving the establishment of working groups and public consultation meetings.

This participative process has generally been viewed positively, particularly by community and voluntary groups.

Having a shared vision provides a framework for change. The process of developing that vision is demanding of time, and requires a degree of honesty and realistic expectations on the part of all concerned. But once it is there, the vision helps ensure that organisations work together in pursuit of common goals, whilst at the same time recognising their individual agendas.

4.3 The role of co-ordinating instruments

Co-ordinating instruments are used to facilitate co-operation and co-ordination. In particular, regulatory, financial and communicative instruments, as highlighted in Chapter 2, are available to governments keen on steering progress on particular cross-cutting issues.

Financial instruments can be particularly influential, given the strong signals and incentives that budget allocations and/or tax reliefs can send to agencies. In the Netherlands, for example, the government wished to encourage closer links between municipalities on environmental issues. They created a scheme whereby agencies which entered into co-operative links would qualify for additional budget allocations to enable additional positions to be staffed in environmental units (de Bruijn and Heuvelhof, 1997, p.130). In the UK, a 'New Deal for Communities' programme is being introduced, whereby local authorities, agencies, local business and community and voluntary groups can bid for funding for the regeneration of local neighbourhoods. Priority will be given in assessing bids to plans which encourage active co-operation across the various agencies involved (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998).

The innovative use of pilot funding arrangements can play an important role in developing effective co-ordinating implementation mechanisms. In the Homeless Initiative, for example, relatively small amounts of money have been made available for grants in addition to what is normally available for homeless services (Boyle and Worth-Butler, 1999). These grants, which are allocated on the basis of competitive tender, focus on innovative approaches to homelessness including enhancing co-operation and co-ordination among agencies. Similarly, in Britain, the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) is designed to act as a catalyst to regeneration initiatives in areas of social exclusion. Under

that scheme, an SRB fund was established and opened to competitive tender from local partnerships to bid for the monies, crossing the public, private and voluntary sectors. An interim evaluation indicates that the fund has led to better co-ordination and the reduction of duplication of effort in areas where the successful bidders are operating (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998). Such initiatives can act as models of good practice for future developments.

If financial incentives such as these are to be effective, the nature and scope of funding must be clarified. Issues such as whether or not the funding is once-off, what vote it is allocated through, and how it can be accessed, must be tackled. Clarity regarding the structure and use of incentives is necessary if they are to be effective. More radically, some initiatives may call for joint or shared budgets to be created that themselves cut across traditional hierarchical lines.

4.4 The role of co-ordinating structures

There are two main structural issues which need to be addressed: determining appropriate governance arrangements, and determining appropriate implementation mechanisms. Each of these need to be considered if the structural inhibitions to managing cross-cutting issues – the multiplicity of organisations, internal organisational structures and boundaries, separate systems and procedures etc. – are to be overcome.

Cabinet sub-committees and an enhanced role for junior ministers are significant features of the political governance structures being put in place to manage cross-cutting issues under the SMI/DBG. Each has an important place, but also has limitations. Committees can dissipate as well as focus activities. Junior ministers can, as the OECD (1996, p.18) note: ‘... have less power than line ministers, or possibly senior civil servants. If these aspiring political leaders are asked to co-ordinate a range of services, and to manage cross-cutting issues controlled by powerful ministers they might be placed in confrontational positions with the senior ministers ...’. However, there clearly needs to be a political dimension to the structures set up to manage cross-cutting issues, to co-ordinate and determine priority actions and expenditures.

At the administrative level, lead departments, the creation of super-ministries (pursued in Canada and Australia for example), inter-departmental task forces, and the establishment of cross-cutting teams are among the structures being put in place to better co-ordinate

activities. Cross-cutting teams, drawn from but independent of line departments, are seen as a new and distinctive contribution to addressing the structural limitations of hierarchy which arise in the civil service. Their role is covered in more detail in Chapter 5. Administrative structures are needed to promote practical co-ordination and integration when addressing cross-cutting issues.

With regard to the executive governing structure at the local level, typically there will be a board or some such equivalent body put in place to establish the framework for the cross-cutting initiative and to overview progress. For example, with regard to local government and local development *The Report of the Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems* (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998) recommends that county/city development boards be established post-1999, with membership drawn from the local authority, traditional social partners, the community and voluntary sector, the local development agencies and relevant state agencies operating at local level.

Key lessons from the operation of such groups or boards (Wilson and Charlton, 1997, pp. 40-42) are that such arrangements need to balance representation with the ability to take action and the need to generate a consensus style of decision making. Any board should be representative of the main stakeholders involved, but evidence indicates that they can only operate effectively if executive power lies with a relatively small group. Operating a consensus model rather than a voting system is also often seen to be important in ensuring equality of status for all involved (O'Dowd, 1998, p.79).

At the implementation level, what is often referred to as the need for a 'seamless service' from the user's perspective is important, to ensure that the activities of the various organisations involved are co-ordinated. The aim is to identify and act on the whole range of the users' needs in a way that ensures that the service user is not passed from one place to the other for bits of a service. Humphreys (1997, p. 64) refers to the role of 'government gateways' in integrating services provided by a range of service providers, not necessarily exclusively from the public sector. A recent study in the Australian public service (Department of Finance Resource Management Improvement Board, 1995) identifies four general models to enhance what they term cross-program approaches: first-stop shops; co-location of services; administrative integration; and programme integration.

These models are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and can be combined in different permutations.

First-stop shops aim to improve information provision to service users about different services. *Co-location of services* focuses on improving physical access to a range of services, where users can access all the relevant services from the same location. *Administrative integration* refers to the reduction of administrative complexity and duplication and increased efficiency which can arise from sharing functions and data across programmes and offices. Information technology has a key role to play here in aiding the provision of improved integrated administrative delivery systems at the local level. *Programme integration* focuses on improving the design and co-ordination of a range of related programmes to better meet user needs. One agency may take on responsibility for a variety of programmes previously delivered by several sources. ‘Broadbanding’ may also be used: combining individual programmes into one programme and pooling budgets so as to facilitate more flexibility in service design and delivery.

4.5 Developing a supportive policy and user community

The policy community for cross-cutting issues – policy analysts in government departments and agencies, interest groups, the academic community etc. – has an important role to play in addressing cross-cutting issues. Within the public service there is a need for the development of systems and procedures which enable the policy community to complement internal policy capacity, and stimulate a ‘challenge’ function to avoid complacency and group-think.

In Canada, a Policy Research Committee was formed in 1996 to strengthen policy capacity and develop a strong policy community (see Box 3). This is in recognition of the need to develop a new approach to policy work, with greater emphasis on the longer-term, greater co-ordination and collaboration across departments and levels of government and a more open policy development process (Fifth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada, 1998). In Ireland, some initial steps have been taken with the creation of a policy analysts’ network to provide training and development support for analysts in government departments, although this does not directly address the wider issue of greater involvement of the broader policy community.

With regard to specific cross-cutting issues, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) provides an example of attempts to involve the broader policy community in the development, definition and analysis of the issues under scrutiny. A number of mechanisms are being used to consult with the community and voluntary sectors, service users and those with first hand experience of poverty:

- involvement in working groups on specific initiatives
- monitoring of the NAPS, in particular through the National Economic and Social Forum
- funding for national anti-poverty networks to promote information dissemination, discussion and feedback
- occasional consultative seminars with the community and voluntary sectors.

Box 3: The Canadian Policy Research Committee

The Policy Research Committee involves more than thirty federal departments and agencies. Its main task is to anticipate the policy issues of greatest importance to Canada up to the year 2005. The committee has established four research networks around the issues of growth, human development, social cohesion and global challenges and opportunities. Its work is overseen by a steering committee of assistant deputy ministers, and is co-ordinated by the Privy Council Office.

The committee aims to provide policy researchers and developers with a sense of community, working closer and learning from one another. A conference for over 300 public servants working in policy development, analysis and research was held in November 1997 where strategic policy issues were discussed and contacts established. Also in November 1997, forty external research organisations met to provide networking opportunities for policy researchers and to explore opportunities for collaboration. At the international level, the Policy Research Committee collaborates with the OECD to gain a better understanding of current OECD strategic priorities, to share Canada's perspective on the policy environment and to share information on emerging domestic and international issues.

Source: Fifth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada, 1998, pp. 8-9.

The aim of these and other initiatives is to attempt to ensure that the wider policy community and users of the services have a voice in influencing the way in which cross-

cutting issues are addressed. But co-operation with regard to policy development, whilst easy to advocate is often difficult to achieve. Different organisations and interest groups bring with them varying perspectives and values with regard to problems and issues to be addressed. Lindquist (1992, p.153) suggests ways of improving co-operation:

There are several ways to increase the likelihood that co-operative learning will succeed. First, participants must be committed to the specific values and problems motivating the interaction, but should not be expected to embrace each other's belief systems. An atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance of different belief systems must be established among representatives from different sectors and advocacy coalitions. Secondly, participants must search for a common and neutral language to facilitate constructive dialogue on matters of substance, and inform these discussions with credible data focused on the issues at hand. Finally, there must be a bias towards achieving concrete results, otherwise interest will flag and the exercise will be symbolic.

It is particularly important that a user perspective is built into the process, to ensure that the issue is looked at from this point of view rather than simply from a bureaucratic perspective. This point is well illustrated by Wistow and Barnes (1993, pp. 296-27) in a study of user involvement in community care in Birmingham: '... carers at least may be less concerned with cultural change than practical improvements to services such as ensuring that transport runs on time. It may be that a willingness on the part of providers to give priority to such basic improvements in service quality would in itself be an indication of cultural change.' Giving users a clear voice in the process may stop or negate possible inward looking efforts to change the culture, and help focus on practical actions of direct benefit which, of themselves, may in the longer term help bring about cultural change with regard to better co-operation and co-ordination in service delivery.

A further way of ensuring that the user's perspective has weight is through reviewing and evaluating service provision from a user perspective. In England and Wales, for example, in the last couple of years the Audit Commission has started a series of value-for-money studies of services from the user's perspective, looking at the way services are delivered locally across organisational boundaries. For example, a study of the juvenile justice system was critical of the way young offenders are handled by a large number of different

agencies (*Public Finance*, 1996, p.4). This audit function ensures that cross-cutting issues are addressed seriously from a user perspective.

4.6 The role of the centre

Determining the appropriate role for the centre of government, and deciding when it should intervene in cross-cutting issues, is an important task. It would be counter-productive to try to involve the centre in all cross-cutting issues, as this would likely lead to information overload and additional layers of bureaucracy. In many cases, the relevant departments and agencies should be left to manage issues themselves. But clearly there are some issues which are key government priorities, posing particular problems where the centre needs to play a key role. The British initiative of re-structuring the Cabinet Office arose from concerns about the lack of strong central machinery to ensure co-ordination. As indicated by Walker (1997, p.15): 'No matter how loving a minister's relations with his cabinet colleagues, there comes a point at which their interests conflict. It is then that a strong centre needs to step in to referee, slap down insubordination and keep ministers as close as possible to the government's priorities. The principal co-ordinator has to be the prime minister and that entails having eyes and ears of the highest receptivity.' The New Zealand experience also stresses the important role of central agencies. In particular, the centre must establish the policy framework, engage in information gathering and analysis, and monitor implementation and impact.

With regard to establishing the policy framework, Strategic Results Areas (SRAs), reviewed above, are the main mechanism proposed by the Irish government to determine longer-term objectives of a cross-cutting nature. The intention is to define a common agenda for action which can be used coherently. The centre must use this strategic framework to focus line departments' attention on the critical issues agreed.

With regard to information gathering and analysis, effective information flows have to be established between the centre and line departments, across line departments, and between the centre and the political level. The OECD (1996, p.15) has addressed this issue. In connection with the interface between the centre and line departments, it recommends: 'One technique is to establish procedures whereby the centre is routinely notified of meetings of inter-ministry co-ordination bodies, and afterwards receives reports (even if only verbal) on the results of discussions.' The need for staff skilled in the capacity to

filter, interpret and prioritise information, so as to minimise information overload problems, is stressed.

With regard to monitoring implementation and impact, the centre has a key role to play in tracking developments on cross-cutting issues, and keeping the main players informed on progress. Reviewing progress with the implementation of SRAs and other cross-cutting initiatives will involve the establishment of feedback mechanisms to enable the centre to make judgements on the pace and direction of progress.

4.7 Cultural change

Cultural change refers to the need to break down bureaucratic and hierarchical mind sets and values and to encourage co-operative values. As Clarke (1998, p.12) notes, structural inhibitions to the management of cross-cutting issues are often compounded and reinforced by cultural inhibitions: 'Separate organisations and their boundaries become the limits within which people define the way their organisations are, how they do things and in which accepted behaviour is defined. Collective views of the world, aspirations and all the soft parts of organisational life reinforce the harder-edged realities. Culture needs to change.'

With regard to the role of values and mind sets, a review of a Combat Poverty Agency demonstration programme on educational disadvantage highlights some interesting issues. The initiative aims to co-ordinate and integrate community-based initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage. An evaluation carried out by the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, indicates that personnel in the different agencies involved (educational, justice, health and community) operate from contrasting value and conceptual systems. Three broad systems or frameworks of values are identified (Cullen, 1998, p.2):

- The *instructive* framework located in the world of formal education and training. It supports academic and scholastic attainment.
- The *interventional* framework, where professional and statutory systems take direct responsibility to step into situations in order to protect children from abuse or neglect, avert truancy etc.
- The *interactive* framework, where informal community and family systems are mobilised to develop appropriate supports and community capacity.

As Cullen (1998, p.2) notes with regard to these frameworks:

Some practitioners and the agencies and services in which they work have the ability to straddle frameworks; to teach and to engage community supports; to be a social worker and to be involved in community development; to be a community leader and to provide instruction. However, their overall tendency is to orient towards the framework in which they are located ... An important starting point for developing integrated systems is that those who operate out of the framework recognise the validity, potential and limitations of each of the others, as well as of their own.

The main point here is that to facilitate close co-operation and integration on cross-cutting issues, it is as important to devote time and energy to the understandings and value systems of all involved as it is to devote efforts to structural and process mechanisms. In particular, there are implications for the operational practice of ministers and public servants regarding policy development and implementation on cross-cutting issues. A strategic framework such as SRAs juxtaposes shared values alongside contrasting value systems, and requires a disciplined follow-through if a culture of collaboration is to be achieved.

4.8 Conclusions

Going back to the continuum of complexity of cross-cutting issues referred to in the Introduction, it is possible to envisage a variety of structures and processes being put in place to tackle cross-cutting issues. A range of possible alternative responses are outlined in Figure 2, using co-ordinating instruments, structures and the role of the centre to illustrate the variety of arrangements possible.

**Figure 2: Managing cross-cutting issues of varying complexity:
alternative approaches**

Complexity of issue	Structures	Co-ordinating instruments	Role of centre
Routine issues focused on departmental business	Lead department determines structures. Task forces on specific topics. Routine cabinet procedures used when change needed.	Limited use of instruments needed.	Limited. Lead department takes on main role.
Issues needing integrated policies	Cabinet sub-committees and/or lead role for junior ministers at political level. Cross-cutting teams utilised at administrative level.	Active use of regulatory, financial and communicative instruments.	Sets strategic framework and reviews progress.
Intractable and key priority issues	Radical structures likely to be needed to counter-balance existing hierarchies. Prime ministerial involvement at political level. Senior management involvement at administrative level.	Active use of instruments. Particular role for financial incentives to promote co-ordination.	Dominant. Centre as catalyst for change in addressing the issue.

At the most straightforward level are routine cross-cutting issues where one department clearly has a lead role. Here, the role of the centre is likely to be limited, with the lead department itself taking on responsibility for co-ordination. The use of co-ordinating instruments is likely to be relatively straightforward and uncontentious. Simple structures can be put in place, perhaps including task forces on specific topics and using the routine cabinet systems and procedures when changes are needed.

As cross-cutting issues become more complex and require the integration of policies, more active use of co-ordinating instruments is likely. Structurally, cross-cutting teams reporting to junior ministers or cabinet sub-committees is likely to be a mechanism used to advance progress. The role of the centre is likely to increase. Strategic frameworks such

as SRAs will be needed to provide a policy context, with the centre monitoring and reviewing progress.

At the most complex end of the continuum lie the key priorities and most intractable cross-cutting issues, where there is little pre-existing agreement among those involved on the best ways forward. Here, the role of the centre is crucial, as a catalyst and facilitator of change. Ownership of advancement of the issue is likely to reside at the centre, given the importance and/or complexity of the issue. An active use of all the co-ordinating instruments is likely to be needed, particularly reviewing the role of financial instruments in establishing incentives to promote co-ordination.

Structurally, strong co-ordination structures will be needed to ensure co-ordination in a setting where, if there are disagreements, the pull to traditional hierarchies will be strong. In order to overcome problems of junior ministers not having enough power compared to senior line ministers, as noted above, it is likely that senior ministerial involvement (as in the New Zealand State Services Commission (1998) proposal for SRA ministers) or the personal attention of the prime minister will be needed. Similarly at the administrative level, initiatives such as cross-cutting teams may or may not be enough to overcome resistance to change. Giving senior managers a co-ordinating role is likely to be important, as in the private sector where, in relation to supply-chain management, senior managers are being taken out of the hierarchy and given a specific remit to manage the supply chain across a range of organisations. Another useful development in the private sector is the use of 'away-days' for boards where major strategic issues are discussed off-site without decisions having to be made on the spot. Some such equivalent for top management in the public service could be envisaged to address intractable cross-cutting issues. Such meetings would require a clear agenda and objectives. The aim would be to outline the relevant issue and range of possible solutions, drawing on government policies and priorities, and to explore the strengths and weaknesses of possible approaches.

In summary, the more complex and the greater the level of disagreement about the management of the cross-cutting issue, the more radical the approach needed if change is to take place.

5. Team-based Approaches to the Management of Cross-Cutting Issues

5.1 Introduction

Whilst the focus in Chapters 2 to 4 is on the establishment of broad frameworks supportive of managing cross-cutting issues, here the focus shifts to an examination of the role of cross-cutting teams. Such teams are a central feature of the approach to managing cross-cutting issues outlined in *Delivering Better Government* (1996). They differ from more traditional inter-departmental teams or task forces in that they can be drawn from and yet be independent of the constituent organisations, with co-ordination provided by a minister/minister of state or cabinet sub-committee. They are intended to be truly cross-functional in their approach to change, cutting across existing vertical hierarchies.

But, in analysis of the replacement of vertical hierarchies with horizontal networks in organisations, Hirschorn and Gilmore (1992) stress that new boundaries are created:

Managers are right to break down the boundaries that make organisations rigid and unresponsive. But they are wrong if they think that doing so eliminates the need for boundaries altogether. Indeed, once traditional boundaries of hierarchy, function and geography disappear, a new set of boundaries becomes important. These new boundaries are more psychological than organisational (pp. 104-105).

Four new boundaries are identified to which managers must pay attention (Hirschorn and Gilmore, 1992, pp. 107-109):

- *The Authority Boundary.* Here the key question is ‘who is in charge of what?’ Determining mandates and responsibilities is an important task, as clearly is defining the issues to be addressed.
- *The Task Boundary.* The key question here is ‘who does what?’ Determining who does what within the team, and how to ensure that those outside the team who are crucial to implementation take action are crucial tasks here.
- *The Political Boundary.* Here the critical question is ‘what’s in it for us?’ Managing the interaction with different interests is a key task.

- *The Identity Boundary*. Here, the main question is ‘who is – and isn’t – us?’ The task here is to engender a sense of team spirit and co-operation without becoming introspective. The management of values is important here.

How these boundaries are managed when addressing cross-cutting issues provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the challenges posed for team-based approaches to the management of cross-cutting issues. They provide the framework for this part of the paper.

5.2 Determining purpose and accountabilities: how to manage the authority boundary

While a mechanism such as SRAs is helpful in determining and clarifying political priorities and providing a context for the management of cross-cutting issues, it is also necessary that steps be taken beyond this to define the nature and scope of the issue to be addressed and determine who is responsible for what. Issue definition is important in clarifying the purpose of the exercise, providing a shared vision and sense of priority, and in managing expectations (Canada, Report of the Task Force on Managing Horizontal Policy Issues, 1996). Developing an agenda for action is also a key early exercise, particularly determining the accountability framework needed to clarify who is responsible for what.

5.2.1 Issue definition

In the cases studied, important and substantial work had been undertaken prior to the formation of cross-cutting teams which helped define the issue under scrutiny and set boundaries on what was to be addressed:

For the SMI team, *Delivering Better Government* (DBG) (1996), the second report to government of the Co-ordinating Group of Secretaries, outlined a programme of change for the Irish civil service. Facilitating progress on DBG is the key task of the SMI team. In particular, six working groups were set up to progress particular issues: quality customer service; human resource management; financial management; open and transparent service delivery; regulatory reform; and information technology. The SMI team supports and co-ordinates the work of these groups.

For the National Drugs Strategy team, the *First Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs* (1996) set the initial parameters to the issue to be addressed. The ministerial task force focused particularly on the heroin problem and on specific geographic areas in greater Dublin where the problem was particularly acute.⁴

For the NAPS team, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1996), drawn up by government departments and the social partners following the United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995, outlines a strategic framework, direction and overall objectives for the NAPS. In particular, five key areas were identified as in need of attention if significant advances in tackling poverty were to be achieved: educational disadvantage; unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment; income adequacy; particularly disadvantaged urban areas; and rural poverty.

It is notable that in each of these cases, none of the cross-cutting teams was moving into a completely green-field site with regard to the issues to be addressed. Substantive work had been undertaken defining the issues and specifying the limits of what was to be addressed e.g. an initial focus on heroin and disadvantaged areas of greater Dublin in the case of drugs. This process of specification helps provide a shared vision, in that a large number of stakeholders have already been involved in defining and determining the issue. It also helps manage expectations, in that the boundaries of what is and is not to be included in any specific cross-cutting initiative are established.

This raises an issue for cross-cutting teams where the issue definition stage of the work has not been completed in any systematic manner. It is likely that in such circumstances the team would need to devote a significant amount of time initially to the task of issue definition, and getting stakeholders on-side with the definition. As the Canadian Deputy Ministers' Task Force report on *Managing Horizontal Policy Issues* (1996, p.10) notes:

The basic parameters of the initiative need to be established early in the policy development process including: the relationship to other initiatives; relative priority, funding and timeframes. At the same time, a degree of flexibility should be built into the definition of scope and outcomes to encourage creativity and to respond to changing information or circumstances. Early inter-departmental and broad-based stakeholder involvement in the conceptual phase is critical for buy-in

and ongoing co-operation and to ensure that all relevant factors are considered early in the policy development process.

5.2.2 Developing an agenda for action

Once the issue to be addressed has been defined, it is important that all participants – lead and partner departments, cross-cutting team, local government agencies, voluntary and community sectors etc. – are clear about their mandate and agenda for action. Who does what and who is responsible for what are the key items to be determined here.

For the national drugs strategy, the first ministerial task force report identified a matrix of structural arrangements for the delivery of services: a cabinet sub-committee chaired by the Taoiseach at the top of the matrix⁵; an interdepartmental group of assistant secretaries and the National Drugs Strategy team at the middle; and thirteen local drugs task forces at the base. The roles for each were clearly defined: the cabinet sub-committee to provide political leadership, assess progress and resolve policy or organisational problems inhibiting an effective response to the drugs problem; the National Drugs Strategy team to reflect on policy issues, advise on the allocation of dedicated resources, support and monitor the local drugs task forces and evaluate local task force plans at the operational level; and the local drugs task forces to prepare development plans for their areas. There was a fair degree of clarity around what was to be done and who was responsible for ensuring that action took place at the various levels.

By way of contrast, the SMI team took some time to clarify its role in relation to the implementation of DBG. Its role in providing an effective secretariat to the SMI working groups was clear enough, but there was awareness of the need for a more integrating role, which addressed the bigger picture and some of the issues which were cutting across the different working groups. The SMI team themselves took a couple of months from formation to develop their own agenda, mission and work programme. The SMI team then put a paper to the SMI Co-ordinating Group setting out their overview of the role of the team vis-à-vis the working groups and rolling out the SMI into government departments and agencies. This would seem to indicate that where a cross-cutting issue has a relatively broad focus, such as civil service reform, rather than a tighter focus such as tackling the drugs problem, time is needed at the inception, particularly to allow the team to develop and clarify their own agendas and areas of responsibility, within the parameters laid down by the job in hand.

With regard to the NAPS team, as with the drugs issue, a fairly clear structure for action and responsibility had been outlined in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1996, pp. 20-21) – see Box 4. However, a significant issue here centres on the lack of clarity concerning the respective roles of the NAPS team based in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and other line departments. The role of the NAPS team was not specified in any detail in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The NAPS team are clear themselves that their role is not that of ‘doers’ of identified tasks, but rather facilitators or ‘prompters’ of action in the relevant departments, who retain responsibility for policy in their sphere of activity. However, some voluntary and community groups and some departments would have seen the NAPS team as having more of an implementation role. The NAPS team, while clear on their own role, see a need to promote this understanding more widely.

In developing an agenda for action, one issue which often requires a significant amount of work is the issue of building trust and respect, both within the team and with the main implementation agencies. As noted by Webb (1991, p.237): ‘Trust is pivotal to collaboration. Attitudes of mistrust and suspicion are a primary barrier to co-operation across organisational and professional boundaries ... what is needed is sufficient trust to initiate co-operation and a sufficiently successful outcome to reinforce trusting attitudes and underpin more substantial, and risky, collaborative behaviour.’ This point is well illustrated in the National Drugs Strategy case, where initially there was a lot of scepticism at the local task force level about the initiative. There were suspicions that the intention was primarily to divert public attention from the problem rather than tackle it in a serious manner. The National Drugs Strategy team had to devote a lot of their energy initially to establishing their bona fides, and in dealing with suspicion and some hostility to the process. This placed particular demands on team members (a point developed further below). However, this initial work led to the creation of an atmosphere where sufficient trust was established to begin to make progress, and build on early achievements to further develop trust.

Building up trust can also be an issue within teams. A member of the SMI team noted that it is useful to have ground rules that help encourage trust. Informal ground rules, such as that all members should contribute to team discussions and robust discussion leading to collective commitment to decisions taken, can help engender a team spirit and common commitment to the agenda for action.

Box 4: Institutional structures underpinning the National Anti-Poverty Strategy

At the political level

A cabinet sub-committee dealing with issues of poverty and social exclusion was established. Chaired by the Taoiseach, it includes all ministers whose brief includes policy areas relevant to tackling poverty. The Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs has responsibility for day-to-day political oversight of the strategy, and appears before the Oireachtas Social Affairs Committee to report progress on NAPS. Individual ministers have responsibility for developments in areas under their remit.

At the administrative level

A NAPS inter-departmental policy committee comprising senior officials has responsibility for ensuring that NAPS provisions relevant to their departments are implemented. The NAPS team, based in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, is expected to liaise with and complement the role of the Combat Poverty Agency. Departments are expected to address poverty issues in their statements of strategy drawn up under the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and to produce annual progress statements to the inter-departmental policy committee.

At local and regional level

Community and enterprise groups will be responsible for developing plans, including local area action plans, focused on social exclusion. Also, at local government level, social inclusiveness is to be fostered through a renewed system of local government as outlined in Better Local Government (1996).

Monitoring and evaluation

The National Economic and Social Forum has responsibility for monitoring the social inclusion element of Partnership 2000. The Combat Poverty Agency has responsibility for evaluation of the NAPS. The agency also has an advisory role, supporting government departments and local structures in the development of anti-poverty strategies.

Partnership

Consultation with and involvement of the community and voluntary sectors, and service users, is seen as a central feature of the development of the NAPS. Partnership is envisaged between the key actors in strategy development, implementation and monitoring.

Poverty strategy

The NAPS team are clear themselves that their role is not that of 'doers' of identified tasks, but rather facilitators or 'prompters' of action in the relevant departments, who retain responsibility for policy in their sphere of activity. However, some voluntary and community groups and some departments would have seen the NAPS team as having more of an implementation role. The NAPS team, while clear on their own role, see a need to promote this understanding more widely.

5.2.3 Summary

Clarifying purpose and accountabilities is an important task early on in the management of cross-cutting issues. Organisations and individuals are each likely to have their own goals they want to achieve through collaboration. These goals may be contradictory or at a minimum fail to encourage joint working. Some common agreement on the issue to be addressed and on who is responsible for what is needed to minimise such tensions. Involving the main stakeholders in issue definition is important, as is getting agreement on the boundaries of the initiative: what is and is not to be tackled. This is needed to manage expectations.

It is also important that all those participating are clear about who does what and who is responsible for what. This may take some time to be clarified and agreed, and time needs to be devoted to this task early on. In this way, the broad agenda for action is agreed: both what is to be done and who is to do it. As with most agendas, this is intended to provide a guiding framework rather than a restrictive straight jacket.

The development of trust, particularly between groups of organisations who may not be used to collaborating, also needs to be addressed. Cross-cutting teams need to establish effective ground rules for behaviour. Between organisations and groups, the task is to develop sufficient trust to enable modest first steps to be taken which can then be built on and allow more trusting attitudes to be developed.

5.3 Getting the job done: how to manage the task boundary

Work on cross-cutting issues requires that specialised tasks be carried out within the parameters of the shared purpose determined for the enterprise. Some tasks must be accomplished by the team assembled to co-ordinate activities. Some tasks are beyond the remit of the team and the team must get others – voluntary and community groups, government agencies etc. – to undertake specific tasks. Determining who does what, sharing and co-ordinating the tasks to be done, is crucial here. It is also important that there is constant monitoring and evaluation of how the initiative is progressing and that, for teams with specific timeframes, exit strategies are developed to ensure continuing implementation after their disbandment. Getting things done in an environment where no one person or group controls or possesses all the skills or resources needed is the challenge to be addressed in this context.

5.3.1 Getting things done through the team

As mentioned above with regard to developing an agenda for action, it can take time for a cross-cutting team to develop and clarify its own agenda for action. Whilst setting specific goals and targets is a key task for the team to accomplish, it may take a while for the team to do this, particularly if it is moving into a relatively 'green-field' site. For example, the SMI team members interviewed are clear that whilst setting goals and objectives for the team is a crucial activity, they were not in a position to do this at the start of their three-year period. New tasks were evolving as the team formed, such as facilitating the establishment of the National Centre for Partnership, which had not been envisaged at the start of the process. As Huxham (1996, p.249) states with regard to clarifying goals: 'To get moving, 'enough' of a statement of meta-goals is needed, accepting that more specific goals will need to be discovered and elaborated as the collaboration evolves.'

For the National Drugs Strategy initiative, in order to ensure that things get done, the inter-departmental group, formed at assistant secretary level, has as its remit: to review the progress of implementation of the strategy; address policy issues arising from implementation; and report to the cabinet sub-committee, highlighting issues requiring political direction or decision. The remit of the National Drugs Strategy team is to identify and highlight policy issues, ensure co-ordination in the implementation of the strategy and oversee, monitor and evaluate the work of the local drugs task forces and developments at the local level⁶.

As has been mentioned in a previous study of team-based working (Boyle, 1997, p.11), because of the complexity of tasks undertaken by cross-cutting teams and the long time horizon needed to tackle many cross-cutting issues, the setting and monitoring of interim milestones is important: 'Teams must chart their progress towards their ultimate goals by setting intermediate targets which act as a guide for checking progress and direction within the team.' Also, as mentioned above in section 3.5, team targets need to link with SRAs or their equivalent. In this context, the performance management process currently being put in place in the civil service should be of assistance. The proposed team planning matrix (see Figure 3) aims to set out a team's performance plan and should provide the framework for determining what the team and individual members are expected to achieve over the coming year. The team objectives should act as milestones for assessing achievement against the broad meta-goals set out in SRAs or their equivalent, and help ensure that individual and team accountabilities are clearly determined.

Figure 3: Team planning Maxtrix

TEAM OBJECTIVES	TEAM MEMBERS						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	P	S	S	–	–	–	–
2.	–	P	S	S	S	–	–
3.	S	S	S	–	–	P	–
4.	S	–	S	S	P	–	–
5.	–	S	S	P	S	S	–
6.	(P)	S	(P)	–	–	–	–

The steps in the exercise are as follows:

1. The team agrees its objectives for the year.
2. Each objective is made as SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) as possible
3. Each individual team member (including team leader) indicates on their copy of the matrix what accountability they feel towards each objective. The following convention is recommended.

P (PRIME)	Where they feel they will be fully accountable for the delivery of that objective
S (SUPPORT)	Where they feel that they need to support (in a tangible way) a colleague who is Prime.
–	Where they cannot see any direct link between their job and the objective

4. Each team member is invited to read out his/her 'line'. This is entered onto a master copy. Invariably there will not be universal agreement on the Prime/Support roles first time round.
5. Each objective is discussed in turn and the team agrees who is Prime for each objective. Once this is agreed, the person who is Prime states who he/she expects to be in a Support role, and clarifies from who support is required.
6. A copy of the finished matrix for each member of the team is circulated.

(Source: Hay Management Consultants study for the civil service on developing a performance management process for the civil service).

A contextual point to note regarding getting things done through teams is that it is important that the team have the necessary supports – accommodation, secretarial etc. – needed to ensure that they operate effectively. This point is illustrated by the National Drugs Strategy team, where the provision of a base and administrative and technical support took some time to sort out. Having their own headquarters is viewed by team members as important in supporting team building and co-operation. With regard to

administrative and technical support, as no department could fund this from their resources, eventually the National Drugs Strategy team decided to use the mechanism of a Section 65 grant from the Eastern Health Board to the Merchants Quay project to provide secretarial support⁷. However, more analytical support, for example at civil service higher executive/administrative officer level with skills at drafting papers etc., could not initially be provided, and these tasks have had to be carried out by team members. Recently, an administrative officer has been appointed on loan to work with the team, and this has produced significant benefits, enhancing team working practices.

5.3.2 Getting things done through others

Cross-cutting teams have limited capacity to bring about change themselves. They rely on others – those in government departments and agencies, voluntary and community groups etc. – for much of the implementation. Getting things done through others is, therefore, a key and challenging task.

In this context of getting things done through others, managing the boundaries between the team and other organisations is important. Developing and clarifying the vision and main objectives for the collaboration provides an over-arching framework which individual organisations and groups can buy into. Being involved in addressing an issue of significance to society can in itself be a motivating force. Within the team, Parker (1994, p.50) recommends that the team should select informal ‘boundary managers’ from team members skilled in handling flows of information and resources. For both the SMI and the National Drugs Strategy teams, team members are allocated particular groups with whom they have built up working relationships. SMI team members are each allocated to one of the SMI working groups, effectively providing the secretariat for that group. The National Drugs Strategy team members are allocated specific responsibility for one or more of the local drugs task forces. This role proved particularly challenging, as some local groups were initially quite wary of this central initiative and team members had to cope with some challenging and difficult sessions with local representatives.

Outside of the team, there is often the need for what Webb (1991, p.231) refers to as reticulist posts: individuals who are specifically identified and associated with facilitating co-operation and co-ordination. For both the NAPS and SMI, departments were asked to identify specific people – liaison officers in the case of NAPS, SMI co-ordinators in the case of the SMI – who would liaise with the central cross-cutting team and promote and

disseminate information about change within their departments. These posts have tended to be allocated at or around civil service assistant principal officer level. Their ability to promote and influence change within departments varies across departments.

The National Drugs Strategy initiative took a different approach to this reticulist role, and here, the team members themselves fill this role. The team members are not full-time on the team, unlike the SMI and NAPS teams, and share their team duties with duties back in their own organisations. The intention here is that they will directly work for and advocate change in their own departments and agencies. This approach is feasible in this case, as only a limited number of departments and agencies are involved, as opposed to the SMI and NAPS, which affects all government departments.

Also important in relation to getting things done through departments and agencies is ensuring that cross-cutting issues are identified and addressed in their business plans. High level goals identified in strategy statements are to be translated into divisional and work unit business plans. Business unit objectives, as with the team objectives and targets outlined above, can serve to operationalise SRAs in a meaningful way at the workplace level. An assessment of business plans should be able to highlight how cross-cutting issues are being progressed within departments and agencies.

Political commitment is also necessary to promote inter-departmental and agency co-operation on cross-cutting issues. Political commitment ensures that priority is given to an issue and, through cabinet, provides a means of securing collective agreement on issues extending beyond individual ministerial portfolios. As Murray (1998, p.42) notes: ‘... there has been a growing tendency to use ad hoc cabinet sub-committees as a forum to address issues of particular concern to a smaller number of departments ... The cabinet sub-committee system brings together ministers and departments centrally involved in particular policy issues and facilitates discussion, co-ordination and decision making.’ The cabinet sub-committee approach is used to co-ordinate activities in both the NAPS and the National Drugs Strategy initiative. The National Drugs Strategy initiative was originally co-ordinated by a cabinet drugs committee, but this role was, following a change of government, taken over by a cabinet sub-committee on social inclusion. The NAPS also reports to this same cabinet sub-committee. The sub-committee is chaired by the Taoiseach, and meets once a month. The sub-committee acts as a stimulus for action,

ensures that political priorities are clarified and articulated, and monitors overall progress with regard to implementation.

Whilst political pressure is needed as an element in getting things done through others, it can cause tensions with regard to realistic timeframes, as the Canadian Deputy Ministers' Task Force report on *Managing Horizontal Policy Issues* (1996, p.12) notes: 'Priority issues arise due to public and political pressure. While responding to this pressure, case studies underlined the importance of realistic expectations with respect to timing and outcomes. Consultation and co-ordination are time consuming. As a result, where a policy initiative is cross-cutting, tight timeliness may compromise the outcomes and the level of buy-in.' This point was noted in the case of the National Drugs Strategy initiative. Particularly at the initial plan preparation stage, the need for sufficient time for people to learn about and buy into the process was highlighted.

A further point highlighted in the literature is the need for some 'quick wins' to encourage support for the implementation of actions across agencies. Webb (1991, p.239) notes that '...small successes in joint endeavours may be needed to generate a virtuous spiral of expanding trust.' Wilson and Charlton (1997, p.57), on the basis of interviews with a range of successful partnerships state:

that a partnership should aim to develop a 'balanced portfolio' of objectives. At one level it is important that the initiative is seen to be doing something concrete in the short-term. For this reason, it should seek to establish a number of clearly defined, easily delivered outcomes ... the initial enthusiasm and momentum of a partnership will be better sustained with a few 'early wins'.

The strategic use of limited financial resources can also encourage some initial success, and can be useful in winning commitment across the board to address the issues raised. For example, in the National Drugs Strategy initiative, the government approved funding of £10 million in 1997 to support the implementation of non-mainstream elements of the anti-drugs strategies, following their evaluation by the National Drugs Strategy team and approval by government. This funding, beyond mainstream funding, helped win commitment from local groups involved at the local task force level to preparing action plans, knowing that some additional resourcing would be available to support innovative projects. The administration and allocation of this money was particularly time consuming

for the National Drugs Strategy team, limiting the time available to focus on policy and strategic issues. However, it was seen as particularly important in terms of community capacity building at the local level, in places where there was previously little community infrastructure on the ground.

In general, and to summarise the points made in this section on getting things done through others, what is needed here is skills in ‘management by influence’ rather than ‘management by command’. As the examples here show, there are a number of means available for management by influence: developing a shared vision of significance to society; the use of political pressure and prioritisation; the use of people in linking roles to span the boundaries between organisations; the commitment of dedicated resources to foster action and so on. Key to the management by influence approach is an understanding of what means are available for influence, allied with an understanding of the culture of the other agencies and groups involved.

5.3.3 Monitoring, evaluation and exit strategies

If progress is to be maintained in implementing actions to tackle cross-cutting issues, it is important that there is systematic monitoring of activities to ensure that the necessary outputs are being produced and that the inputs are utilised efficiently. In the National Drugs Strategy initiative, for example, the interdepartmental group, in co-operation with the National Drugs Strategy team, makes regular progress reports to the cabinet sub-committee on social inclusion. In the case of NAPS, departments are required to produce annual progress statements to an inter-departmental committee, setting out progress achieved against work plans over the previous year in relation to the strategy.

With regard to assessing the outcomes of cross-cutting initiatives, formal evaluation is more likely than monitoring systems to give an insight into this issue. Both the NAPS and National Drugs Strategy have formal evaluation procedures to help assess the impact of the initiatives. For NAPS, the Combat Poverty Agency has a specific role in overseeing the evaluation of the NAPS process. The National Drugs Strategy initiative has commissioned an independent external evaluation, to establish whether the initiative has achieved the objectives set for it and to determine what worked and what might have been done differently.

It is also important that, when monitoring and evaluating activities, time-bound initiatives give thought to exit strategies: how to ensure that the new collaborative efforts continue once the initiative itself has ended, rather than organisations reverting back to the old way of working.

5.3.4 Summary

Getting the job done when addressing cross-cutting issues requires buy-in from a wide range of organisations, groups and individuals. Within the team itself, it is important that the cross-cutting team has the supports needed to enable it to get on with the job. An adequate base and administrative support are vital basic elements. The team then needs to set and monitor interim milestones or objectives, clarifying and agreeing who is responsible for what.

Most important is the ability to get things done through others. Addressing cross-cutting issues requires the ability to influence others – colleagues, other organisations, voluntary and community groups – to ensure implementation in their spheres of responsibility. Management by influence without the formal authority to command becomes the key to securing action. Knowing which means are available for influence and when and how they should be applied is important. Some of the main influence factors are: using political influence; establishing effective ‘boundary managers’; getting some quick wins; and using the leverage of financial resources for innovative activities.

Monitoring and evaluation is important to judge the success of the initiative against its stated aims and objectives. Monitoring can also, of itself, act as a useful means of maintaining pressure for action.

5.4 Developing a supportive culture for cross-cutting issues: how to manage the political and identity boundaries

Changing the culture of organisations and individuals, so that they support the management of cross-cutting issues rather than promote ‘territorial protection’, can be a significant challenge. Managing the interaction of groups and organisations with different interests – the political boundaries – requires people to face the challenge of promoting their own interests without undermining the effectiveness of a co-ordinated approach to the management of the issue or the collective impact of working together. Similarly, it requires the development of shared values – the identity boundary – which promote co-

operation and co-ordination. Particularly important in the team context is ensuring that individuals with the right skills and competencies are selected to work on cross-cutting teams, and providing appropriate training and development supports.

5.4.1 Ensuring individuals with the right skills and competencies work on cross-cutting issues: providing necessary organisational supports

For all three of the cross-cutting teams examined here, the need not only for analytical and decision-making skills was stressed by interviewees, but also the need for strong interpersonal and teamworking skills. Issues such as the need to be flexible in approach to the work, to be able to balance a variety of tasks, and to cope with uncertainty and change, were all highlighted as important skills. As mentioned previously with regard to the National Drugs Strategy team, at times groups or organisations can be hostile to or questioning of the approach being adopted in a particular initiative, and team members must be able to cope with such situations. Resilience is a quality needed in team members. One particular tension which team members must manage is to balance the autonomy of the team with accountability to their constituent organisations. This is particularly the case with a team such as the National Drugs Strategy team, where they are working part-time in the team and part-time in their own organisation. Huxham (1996, pp. 246-248) notes how being accountable to both their organisation and to the collaboration can create a lack of autonomy both for the individual organisations and for the collaboration:

... trying to initiate even small actions, which could be completed competently and quickly within one organisation acting autonomously, or by the core groups acting autonomously, can be a very frustrating experience in the context of collaboration. Unless the action is a high priority for at least someone in the system, it is likely to be put off and put off.

It is likely to be important in this context that core team members have sufficient seniority and authority that they do not have to keep checking back to their constituent organisations on even small matters requiring action.

A mix of skills are needed in cross-cutting teams. Sometimes it might be relevant to bring in skills from outside the public service. The National Drugs Strategy team has two members on it from the voluntary and community sectors, employed on a 2.5 days per week contract. These members have proved invaluable not only in their general

contribution as team members but also in providing the team with a barometer of what is happening on the ground and facilitating the active participation of their respective sectors.

Cross-cutting teams require high-level, appropriately skilled individuals to be assigned to such activities. Indeed, the Canadian Deputy Ministers' Task Force report on *Managing Horizontal Policy Issues* (1996) notes that team membership should be seen as a developmental opportunity for staff. Such assignments should be viewed as opportunities for potential 'high-flyer' type staff to be challenged and rewarded by taking on innovative tasks associated with the management of cross-cutting issues.

But, if such a developmental approach is to take place, departments must recognise and support such an approach to the management of cross-cutting issues. Often, this may not be the case. In the course of the interviews for this study, problems with some departments viewing cross-cutting teams as a drain on already stretched resources or as yet another committee to send staff to, or to send alternates when particular individuals were not free, were noted. Indeed, for some cases there was a view that an assignment with a cross-cutting team could actually hinder individual promotional opportunities rather than enhance them, as the work takes individuals outside the 'mainstream' of departmental activity.

In terms of changing or developing departmental culture to support the addressing of cross-cutting issues, the Canadian Deputy Ministers' Task Force report on *Managing Horizontal Policy Issues* (1996, p.36) identifies a number of issues which departmental top management may wish to focus on:

- building the understanding and commitment of their senior management teams;
- integrating horizontal issues management into their day-to-day decision making;
- ensuring that their human resource management policies reflect and encourage teamwork and horizontal issues management as well as provide opportunities to broaden perspectives;
- strengthening the policy research and development capacities of the department and building informal links to other departments.

All of these are important, but the third bullet point, referring to HRM policy development, is particularly appropriate to the Irish civil service at the moment with the development of new HR policies currently being pursued under the SMI. It would seem crucial that HRM policies which are being developed reflect the importance of cross-cutting issues, and highlight the development opportunities available to staff working on cross-cutting issues. Such a move, backed up with appropriate actions, would of itself act as a significant incentive and reward mechanism supporting the assignment of individuals with appropriate skills to the management of cross-cutting issues.

5.4.2 Training and development supports

All three of the cross-cutting teams studied here noted that formal, off-the-job training courses or packages have a useful but limited role with regard to cross-cutting issues. When faced with a complex, relatively undefined area such as those posed by many cross-cutting issues, experiential on-the-job learning is most important. However, if learning is to be accomplished in such an environment, specific time must be devoted to learning from experience. Here, all the teams examined had made use of 'away days', at a venue outside of the office, where they could discuss issues such as work planning and encourage group formation.

With regard to particular skills and competencies where training and development supports are useful, a previous study of team-working (Boyle, 1997, p.20) identifies two main skills categories, which interviews with the cross-cutting teams has validated:

- *Interpersonal skills.* The ability to communicate and deal with conflict in a constructive rather than a negative way. This applies both to individuals and to the team collectively. Team-building activities, group interaction skills and conflict resolution skills can help team members work together more effectively.
- *Problem solving and decision-making skills.* Teams need appropriate tools to solve the complex problems they are faced with. Techniques such as force-field analysis, brainstorming, nominal group technique and simple statistical techniques such as pareto analysis and cause-and-effect diagrams can be useful at the problem-solving stage. At the decision-making stage, tools such as multi-attribute decision analysis and the use of a 'devil's advocate' role to challenge tendencies to group think can be useful (Blennerhassett, 1992, p.15; Guzzo, 1986, pp.56-63).

A further skills category, that of management by influence, has been highlighted in this study. Public servants need to be skilled in analysing and shaping their external environments and the main stakeholder interests. The ability to achieve change through influencing is crucial to the management of cross-cutting issues.

Also, with regard to securing change in departments, the need for training and development support for appropriate departmental staff was highlighted in the interviews. With regard to NAPS, for example, the NAPS team has been involved in securing training supports for departmental liaison officers in consultation with the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD) in the Department of Finance. These supports comprise group sessions focused on training and development needs, and also sessions where community and voluntary group representatives are brought in to talk about the realities of living in poverty. Thus, departmental staff are made familiar with the initiative and the day-to-day realities of the situation and how their policies and programmes impact on this situation.

5.4.3 Summary

As Boston (1992) notes: ‘The forces of departmentalism are strong and can, in certain circumstances prove highly disruptive to good government ... there is a continuing need to ensure that senior officials have an incentive to serve the collective interests of government and encourage inter-departmental consultation and co-operation.’ In terms of incentives, viewing the assignment of individuals to the management of cross-cutting issues as a developmental opportunity would send out strong positive signals. For such action to happen, however, requires departments to support such moves. In particular, human resource management policies at the departmental level need to reflect and encourage inter-departmental working on cross-cutting issues.

The use of appropriate training and development supports can also help create a supportive climate for addressing cross-cutting issues. Experiential, on-the-job learning is crucial, as is the development of influencing skills. Also important is the need to provide training for departmental staff who have a link role to play in the management of cross-cutting issues between their department and the initiative.

Lessons Learned

Interaction among government departments, local agencies and statutory and voluntary bodies in the design and delivery of public services is increasing. This interaction is particularly important, but also particularly difficult, in the management of complex cross-cutting issues such as economic development, homelessness and the needs of children. Joined up solutions to such problems are desirable. But joint working presents particular challenges to those involved. It is possible to discern some lessons from experience as reported here to help those addressing these issues. These lessons can be categorised into: general lessons; lessons regarding practical steps to joint working; and lessons for joint working through cross-cutting teams.

6.1 General principles

A number of general principles emerge from this study of the management of cross-cutting issues:

- Cross-cutting issues vary in complexity. Responses to their management also need to vary to suit the circumstances. Relatively straightforward issues need simple structures, normally under the control of a lead department. More complex issues concerning the integration of policies require actions such as the establishment of cabinet committees, a lead role for junior ministers and the use of cross-cutting teams. The most intractable and key policy issues may require radical solutions such as new organisational structures, top management and high-level political involvement.
- The management of cross-cutting issues is a time-consuming process. This can cause particular tensions for those involved if they are placed in a position of having to balance work both for their own organisation and on a cross-cutting issue. At senior official level, the amount of time taken dealing with diverse cross-cutting initiatives can be considerable. Greater co-ordination of cross-cutting initiatives and channelling them through existing structures at the local level would help address this problem. At the level of day-to-day management, the use where appropriate of dedicated, full-time cross-cutting teams can create the time and space needed for staff to begin to address the issues concerned.
- A strong bias for action is needed if cross-cutting issues are to be addressed. To facilitate such a bias, there is a need for clarity about the objectives to be addressed and

about funding and resourcing supports generally. In particular, issues around whether or not funding is once-off, what vote it is allocated through, and how it can be accessed, must be tackled.

- Empowerment is an important underlying principle in the management of cross-cutting issues. Devolution of appropriate power, responsibilities and accountabilities to those directly involved in co-ordinating activities facilitates more effective decision-making. Similarly, structures and processes that empower end users of services encourage better joint working.
- Building a user perspective into the management of cross-cutting issues grounds actions in the reality of users' experiences. When seen from a user's perspective, the need to progress co-ordination and co-operation is often clearer than when the issue is looked at from an organisation's perspective.
- There is a danger of separate national level initiatives on cross-cutting issues leading to a proliferation of new initiatives, each with their own structure at the local level. These may be un-coordinated and overlapping. The more that initiatives can be channelled through existing structures, particularly local government, the less this is likely to cause major difficulties.

6.2 Practical steps to joint working

For effective management of cross-cutting issues, actions at both national and local levels are needed. Lessons learned from experience here include:

- There is a need for a meta-strategy or broad vision to guide progress at both national and local levels. Developing this shared vision entails not only developing a common purpose, but also recognising the role of individual organisational purposes. Clarifying the self-interest motivations of participating organisations and establishing realistic expectations are important tasks. The creation of a participative process is important if the vision is to be commonly owned.
- A range of co-ordinating instruments can be used to facilitate joint working. In particular, regulatory, communicative and financial instruments are available to steer initiatives in the desired direction. Given the central role of budgets in public service provision, financial incentives can be particularly influential. The creation of a fund, open to competitive tender, for piloting of co-ordinating activities is a useful means of

generating new approaches. Good practice examples can be identified and lessons drawn from their experience.

- The precise nature of co-ordinating structures needed varies with the complexity of the problem. At the political level, cabinet committees and/or junior ministers with particular cross-cutting responsibilities are common approaches used to drive initiatives. At the policy level, lead departments, super-ministers, inter-departmental task forces and cross-cutting teams are the main structures used to co-ordinate activities. A range of implementation mechanisms are available for the delivery of cross-cutting services. Four general models to enhance service delivery are: first-stop shops; co-location of services; administrative integration; and programme integration.
- A strong role for the centre of government is needed, when dealing with particularly complex cross-cutting issues. The centre must keep a focus on government priorities, establish the policy framework, engage in information gathering and analysis, and monitor implementation and impact. The development and tracking of Strategic Results Areas (SRAs), or their equivalent, in particular is a key task. Checking that SRAs are stepped down into actionable statements by the agencies involved is vital to their success.
- Cultural factors can often inhibit effective joint working. Attention to understanding of the mind sets and value systems of those involved in cross-cutting issues is as important as efforts to improve structural and process mechanisms. Taking a user perspective on issues can be particularly helpful here, with services being evaluated and audited from a user perspective.

6.3 Joint working through teams

Cross-cutting teams, detached from departments and agencies, and with a specific remit to address issues, represent an innovative approach to joint working. Lessons learned from experience with this approach so far include:

- Definition and specification of the issue to be addressed, clarification of the mandate and agreement of the agenda for action for the team are crucial to its success. Building trust and respect, both within the team and with the implementation agencies, is important to furthering the agenda for action. It is important that time is taken early on to clarify who does what and who is responsible for what. Teams need to establish effective ground rules for behaviour. The setting and monitoring of interim milestones

to check progress is important. Team targets need to link to SRAs or to equivalent strategic goals.

- Teams must be able to devote sufficient attention to the issues concerned. Full time members, or at least a core of full-time members, are likely to be needed to progress action. Also, it is important that the team have the necessary supports – accommodation, secretarial, IT – to get on with the job.
- A blend of skills and experience is needed to create effective teams. Boundary management skills – managing the relationships with key personnel involved in the issue outside the team – are particularly important. Where appropriate, the inclusion on the team of participants from key groupings, such as the community and voluntary sector, can be helpful. With regard to skills generally, assignment to cross-cutting teams should be seen as a developmental opportunity for staff. If this is to happen, departmental human resource management policies must legitimise and promote such an approach.
- Teams can only do so much themselves. Getting things done through others is crucial for implementation. The identification of staff who can liaise with the cross-cutting team and promote change within their own organisation can be helpful here. So too is ensuring that tasks identified by the team as needing to be addressed are incorporated into organisational, divisional and work unit business plans. Some early quick wins can also create a supportive climate for progressing issues.

6.4 Concluding comments

Improving co-ordination among policy-makers and service providers, between central government agencies, and between central and local levels, is a key theme of the Strategic Management Initiative. It is also one of the most challenging of tasks. Lack of effective co-ordination is probably one of the most commonly heard complaints about public service delivery. There are now many initiatives underway or being planned to more effectively tackle these difficult cross-cutting issues. Central to their success is a sound understanding of the incentives operating on individuals and organisations to act as they do, and the opportunities that exist to promote better joint working to arrive at joint solutions to problems. Structures, processes and culture all need to be addressed if effective, well co-ordinated government of cross-cutting issues is to be achieved.

Notes:

1. In the Canadian civil service, deputy minister is the equivalent of secretary general.
2. In December 1998, as noted in section 3.4, New Zealand adopted a system of Strategic Priorities to replace existing Strategic Results Areas. The main principles and practices behind the operation of the SRA system will continue to apply to Strategic Priorities, but the intention is to give a sharper focus to actions and to evaluation activities. This development is at too early a stage to be fully assessed here. However, it does not invalidate the review of SRA experience conducted.
3. It should be noted, however, that SRAs are only one of the ways in which cross-cutting issues are addressed in New Zealand. Other more common methods are also in use, including: the cabinet committee system; the establishment of ad hoc committees; the establishment of working parties and task forces; regular meetings of chief executives from departments with common interests etc.
4. A second report of the ministerial task force produced in 1997 expanded the issue, to include non-opiates and youth culture, and drugs in prisons.
5. The cabinet drugs committee was later subsumed in a cabinet committee on social inclusion.
6. The formal remit of the National Drugs Strategy operational team, as set out in the Second Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs (1997, p.21) is:
 - ensure that there is effective co-ordination between departments/statutory agencies in implementing the government's anti-drugs strategy;
 - in relation to the local drugs task forces:
 - to oversee their establishment and assist them in their work on an ongoing basis;
 - to draw up guidelines to assist them in the preparation of their anti-drug strategies;
 - to evaluate their strategies, when submitted, and make recommendations to government regarding the allocation of resources to support their implementation;
 - to monitor developments at local level, ensuring that the problems and priorities of communities are being addressed by central government; and
 - to identify and consider policy issues before referring them to the policy team. The policy and operational elements of the team may meet in joint sessions to discuss these issues and any other matters relevant to their remit.
7. Under Section 65 of the Health Act 1953, grants are provided by the health board to organisations providing services similar or ancillary to those provided by the statutory services.

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